Social media is a Product of a Consumer Society. Psychological Causes and Consequences

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ABSTRACT: Social media platforms compete as marketers for our time, attention and data - in effect, we pay for it. But at a high price. This paper seeks to answer the question of how social media use (exploit) psychological phenomena to achieve their business goals and what the psychological consequences of this are, in the light of international research. The aim of the paper is to help understand why and how the excessive use of social media, while supporting self-protection mechanisms, causes addiction, anxiety and self-image disturbance. What is the reason for the aggressive tendencies that accompany social media use and how the superficial and rapid intake of information reshapes cognitive processing, attention, memory and decision-making processes. The paper also reviews the communication phenomena and socio-psychological effects that accompany excessive use of social media, such as peer comparison, changes in patterns of social behaviour, cyberbullying, echo chamber and opinion bubble phenomena, lack of empathy and the culture of erasure, and the impact of all these on users' mental and physical health.

KEYWORDS: excessive use of social media, psychology, social media.

1   INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter) and TikTok have become major players in the digital world in recent years. These platforms are not only communication tools, but also have a significant impact on social and economic life. When analysing the use of social media, it becomes clear that these platforms are products of consumer society, which are 'competing' for our attention, likes and data. People are often unaware of the costs of using social media, both at an individual and social level.

1.1   Price of our data

One of the biggest costs of using social media is access to our data. Platforms collect a wealth of data about their users, including demographic information, behavioural patterns and personal interests. This data is sold to advertisers who display targeted ads. According to Zuboff (2019), "our data has become a commodity through which advertisers can influence our decisions and behavior" (p. 145). This process has significant implications for our privacy and personal autonomy.

1.2   The attention economy and social media

Social media platforms are based on an economy of attention. These platforms offer free services, but they are really competing for users' attention and time, which they sell to advertisers. As Harris (2018) points out, "the business model of social media platforms is to maximize users' attention and engagement to increase the effectiveness of advertising" (p. 24). This means that users are actually paying for services with their data and attention.

The following study seeks to answer the question of how social media use (exploit) psychological phenomena to achieve their business goals, and what psychological consequences this has in the light of international research.

2   DEVELOPMENT OF ADDICTION

Addiction is a condition where someone compulsively seeks and uses a substance or activity. Addiction is most likely to occur when the compulsive activity takes place at the expense of other important life functions (sleep, eating), tasks (work, household chores), or social activities (friends, family), and there is simply no time for these important activities. Research suggests that social media addiction involves similar biological and psychological mechanisms as drug addiction (Montag et al., 2017).

Dopamine is a neurotransmitter that plays a key role in the brain's reward system. When people experience a positive experience, such as achieving a goal or receiving recognition, dopamine is released in the brain, which creates a feeling of happiness. Similar

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mechanisms are at play when using social media. When someone gets a like, share or positive feedback on a post, dopamine is released, which causes a feeling of pleasure (Volkow, 2018). However, the continuous release of dopamine can contribute to addiction in the long term.

However, constant dopamine stimulation can lead to desensitisation, i.e. the brain becomes less sensitive to dopamine. This means that people need more and more social media stimuli to get the same pleasure. This phenomenon explains why some people spend hours on social media platforms, constantly looking for new posts, likes and comments (Kross et al., 2013). The development of addiction therefore leads to users needing more and more energising stimuli to achieve the same level of satisfaction. Checking social media every half an hour is no longer enough, so within minutes he reaches for his smartphone again. Over time, it may even get to the point where you are looking for the stimulus to stop feeling bad, you can't do without it.

In addition, social media platforms use constant attention-grabbing stimuli, ringing, vibrating to alert the user when something "new" is happening on the platform (someone has liked, posted, commented, etc.). This causes the user to interrupt their activity (whether it's sleep, class, or a conversation), check the message, and often stay on the platform for a longer period.

3   SELF-DEFENCE MECHANISM AND SELF-JUSTIFICATION

More or less, we all tend to justify our actions and decisions to protect our positive self-image. One of the most characteristic traits of human thinking is that we like to think of ourselves as rational, honest thinkers, well-informed about the world. We therefore tend to prove to ourselves and others that what we do is not irrational. The need to self-justify often influences our reactions, our decisions, our public stance or how we receive criticism (Mészáros, Németh, 2007). The algorithms of social media platforms are highly effective in exploiting people's self-protection and self-justification mechanisms. Humans tend to pay attention to existing content that is in line with their attitudes and opinions, and to remember them better. This has a self-protective effect. The bubble effect means that users are increasingly exposed to information that is in line with their own views, while excluding opposing views (Pariser, 2011).

Self-protection mechanisms are therefore the psychological processes that help people maintain positive self-esteem and protect themselves from negative emotions. According to cognitive dissonance theory, people tend to avoid information that contradicts their existing beliefs because it triggers unpleasant emotions (Festinger, 1957). Social media algorithms exploit this phenomenon to present content that minimizes cognitive dissonance and enhances users' self-identification. These algorithms are designed to maximize user engagement by providing content and interactions that reinforce users' existing beliefs and positive self-image. Below we describe in detail how these algorithms work and the psychological mechanisms they rely on.

3.1   Seeking likes and recognition

The search for likes and recognition is an important means of self-validation and self-protection, and therefore one of the main attractions of social media, which can lead to addiction. One of the most common strategies on social media platforms is to provide positive feedback. When a user posts a post and receives a lot of likes or positive comments, it reinforces their self-esteem and triggers positive emotions. Algorithms favor such interactions so that users remain active on the platform (Burrow & Rainone, 2017). These platforms have created systems that encourage users to share and respond to content. The psychological effects of such behavior are significant, as people inherently crave recognition and positive feedback. As Burkeman (2017) writes, "the reward mechanisms of likes and shares have a similar effect on the brain as drugs, stimulating dopamine production" (p. 78).

3.2   Self-selection, feedback loops and bubble effect

Social media algorithms further enhance the phenomena of self-selection and the bubble effect. Self-selection means that people tend to choose content that reinforces their existing beliefs and views. Algorithms continuously monitor user interactions and refine content recommendations based on these. This loop increasingly reinforces users' existing beliefs and behavioral patterns, which further increases engagement and time spent on the platform (Vaidhyanathan, 2018). Algorithms take advantage of this to recommend more similar content, which ultimately leads to the creation of a bubble effect. The bubble effect means that users are increasingly exposed to information that is in line with their own views, while excluding opposing views (Pariser, 2011).

3.3   Self-certification

The filter bubble or echo chamber reinforces the user's belief that the majority of people share their opinion, that they belong to the right-thinking camp, which of course feels good, but also distorts the image of reality and public opinion in an extreme way

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due to the need for self-justification. In addition, underneath the condemnation of the behavior of others, there is often a need to protect self-esteem

The social costs of using social media are therefore also significant. Platforms contribute to polarization and social divisions, as algorithms display content that reinforces users' existing views. As Sunstein (2018) points out, "social media algorithms amplify the effect of echo chambers that make it more difficult to understand and accept different points of view" (p. 98). This process also contributes to the escalation of political and social tensions.

3.3.1 Justifying our efforts

The more effort we put in to achieve a goal, the more we tend to justify our actions in hindsight, i.e. we tend to valorize the desired goal and reject any information to the contrary (Aronson, 2023). Social media can provide peer support in this regard. For example, we are more inclined to post our breakfast if it was a "green blend" or a green smoothie than if we had two crispy buns with a big glass of milk. The latter we usually don't even think of posting, whereas the green smoothie is more likely. The reason for this is the need for self-justification, because eating a green smoothie requires a lot of effort: expensive ingredients, laborious preparation, unpleasant taste and a never-ending feeling of hunger. In this case, we feel the need (often unconsciously) to justify that our efforts are not pointless. After posting this, the algorithm can then help us to get feedback from our fellow diners, or even in the form of advertisements selected for us on the basis of our shared preferences and data.

Not only does the algorithm distort our view of the world, suggesting that our attitudes and behaviors are more widely accepted than they really are, but it also reinforces our commitment. And public engagement, according to social psychology research, makes us even more resistant to views and behaviors that differ from our own. A kind of quasi-community can develop, with strong internal peer pressure and a sense of external threat, rejecting those who hold different views.

4 THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CAUSES OF AGGRESSION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media has become an integral part of our lives, providing opportunities to share information and connect, and the self-protection mechanisms described above allow users to feel they can be among the good, intelligent, right-thinking and right-acting people. Meanwhile, research and everyday experiences of users show that the aggression and harassment that often occurs on online platforms is a serious individual, community and social problem. Different forms of aggression include cyberbullying, cancellation culture, and rude, aggressive speech and writing. There are deep psychological reasons behind these phenomena, which are important to understand to tackle the problem and make social media safer.

4.1 The impact of lack of identifiability on social behavior

The possibility of anonymous or pseudonymous communication has become increasingly common with the rise of the internet and social media. The lack of identifiability has a significant impact on social behavior, especially on social media. On the one hand, anonymity allows for free expression and the creation of safe spaces for marginalized groups, but on the other hand it can facilitate the spread of negative behaviors such as harassment, hate speech and disinformation.

One of the main factors contributing to online aggression is the phenomenon of anonymity and online disinhibition. Anonymity allows people to be less afraid of the consequences as their identity remains hidden. According to Suler (2004), disinhibition in the online environment means that people indulge in behaviors that they would not do in an offline environment. This "online disinhibition effect" can take various forms, including verbal aggression and harassment.

Anonymity reduces the individual's sense of responsibility, as he is less likely to be held personally accountable for his actions. This phenomenon, which is explained by deindividuation theory, can lead to a reduction in social norms and control, increasing the likelihood of deviant, aggressive or antisocial behavior.

4.2 Lack of empathy and dehumanization

4.2.1 Communication encoding and decoding in the community space

Man is a social being, and the actual or perceived presence and communication of others influences his behavior and beliefs every minute of his life (Aronson, 2023). The essence of communication is that people in contact with each other are able to communicate what is happening around them and within them - their thoughts and feelings - by means of a uniformly designed system, language and other non-verbal communicative signals, and in this way regulate and influence each other's behaviour and thinking (Buda, 1993). Communication is a process whereby one person consciously or unconsciously influences the thinking and

feelings of another person. Various means are used to convey the effect. We use signs, symbols, which carry ideas as content. However, in most of our social situations, our communication is not always conscious. Whether we want to or not, we are constantly sending signals to other people (Németh, 2005).

However, digitalized, online communication typically and significantly limits the use of both verbal and non-verbal means of communication, changing the means of transmitting and receiving information. In online interactions, we often communicate in a telegraphic style, using few words, abbreviations, chatting, and thus making little use of the expressive power of verbal communication. We also try to express our emotions and attitudes with so-called emoticon, which is no substitute for spontaneous, unconscious emotional communication.

The first of the two levels of communication is the one we tend to focus on: direct or immediate (or content) communication. The linguistic tools of this are words, phrases, symbols, cultural signals (choice of objects, clothing, make-up). The language used in social media is often more informal and shorter than in live speech. The use of slang, abbreviations and colloquialisms is common on online platforms (Crystal, 2011). This is partly due to character limits, such as Twitter's 280-character limit, but also to the need to communicate faster and more effectively (Tagg, 2015). In addition, social media posts are often fragmented, as users formulate short, to-the-point messages to maintain attention.

The other level of communication is metacommunication, which in live speech accompanies and qualifies the target communication in a continuous and spontaneous way. The most common channels are tone of voice, speed, volume, posture, facial expressions, gaze, etc. This type of metacommunication is often completely absent in the online space, so that not only are we less able to articulate what we are saying, but we are not able to convey and express our true feelings, motivations, and relationship with the other party. For example, the direct communication "I'm listening, please tell me,". Can be accompanied by a metacommunicative signal that shows the receiver "I'm impatient, I can't wait for the message to unfold", but it can also be a metacommunicative signal "Don't be afraid, you can say it". An emoji cannot show this difference. But it is important for the speaker to understand whether his partner is listening, understands what he is saying, follows what he is saying, likes it, agrees, etc. Metacommunication can be called relational or emotional communication, since its signals reveal the feelings and relationships of the parties, even unconsciously.

In live speech, feedback is instantaneous and continuous, allowing speakers to respond to each other immediately and change the direction of communication if necessary (Clark, 1996). In social media, however, feedback is often delayed, which changes the dynamics of communication. Due to the asynchronous nature of online conversations, participants in communication do not always respond immediately, which can sometimes lead to misunderstandings and disruptions in the continuity of communication (Baym, 2015).

In summary, the use of language and metacommunication in social media differs from live speech in several ways. The written form, asynchronous communication, abbreviated language forms and the use of emojis all contribute to the specificity of online communication. Although social media cannot fully replace the complex communication signals inherent in live speech, they can also provide a new form of communication.

Metacommunication is much more difficult to regulate than content or direct communication, because it is based on the functioning of ancient brain parts, determined by emotions. Direct communication is consciously controlled and shaped by intention in a live communication situation, and can be easily modified by small feedback (e.g. I don't understand, slow down, please). In the absence of metacommunicative feedback, understanding and empathy are reduced and we find it more difficult to adapt to each other's emotional expressions. This is essential for a deep understanding of others, for a nuanced expression of ourselves, of what we have to say, and for the development of mutual empathy.

The lack of metacommunication can in principle be compensated for by oral or linguistic communication, which has the most complex code of all communication channels. Through this channel, we transmit agreed, commonly agreed signals that are themselves capable of conveying any information. With particularly good linguistic expression, we are also able to communicate emotions, emotions, and visual phenomena, which are not naturally communicated through verbal channels. Precise expression, nuanced wording and the vocabulary used are of the utmost importance in linguistic communication. This is also a fundamental determinant of how what we say is understood and whether our emotions are understood. However, a lot of research points to the fact that online communication makes more limited use of the tools of linguistic expression, which also makes it more difficult to

understand the other person. This reduces the development of linguistic, verbal expressive skills and the appropriate development of empathy, especially when it occurs in the early stages of language socialization (Bódi, 2020; Tari, 2015).

4.2.2 Empathy deficit in online environments

Empathy or empathic capacity allows us to understand and empathize with the feelings, thoughts and perspectives of others. This social emotion plays a key role in interpersonal relationships and social behavior by helping people to understand and empathize with each other. Empathy can be divided into two main components:

Empathy serves several important functions at both the individual and societal level: empathy helps people to develop and maintain deeper, more meaningful relationships. Empathic individuals better understand and support their partners, friends and family members. Empathy also fosters social cohesion and a sense of community, as people are more willing to help others and work together to achieve common goals. Empathic communication can help resolve conflicts and reduce misunderstandings. Empathy allows people to better understand each other's perspectives and needs. Empathy plays an important role in moral development by helping people to recognize and perceive the suffering of others, thereby motivating them to act in the right way.

Online communication poses particular challenges for empathy. Lack of empathy and dehumanization are important factors in online aggression. In online communication, people often do not see the facial expressions or body language of the other party, which makes empathic responses difficult (Kraut et al., 1998). In faceless and anonymous interactions, short, saccadic interactions make it more difficult to recognize emotions and social cues, which can reduce empathic responses. Lack of empathy in the online space can contribute to aggressive behavior and conflict. In dehumanization, users treat the other party as a target rather than as a full human being. This process can contribute to rude, aggressive language and bullying.

4.3 Group dynamics and conformity

Group dynamics and conformity play a significant role in online aggression. Social media platforms allow users to join different groups where they can meet people with similar interests. Such groups often develop an "us versus them" mentality, which can increase aggression towards those outside the group. According to Asch's (1956) theory of conformity, people tend to follow the norms of the group, even if they are contrary to their own beliefs. This can also be observed in the online environment, where group norms can often encourage aggressive behavior.

4.3.1 The culture of erasure and moral judgment

Cancel culture is also an increasingly common phenomenon on social media. This practice involves public criticism and condemnation aimed at weakening or completely erasing the social standing of a person or organization. Often behind the culture of cancel is a moral judgement, whereby users feel entitled to punish others for their perceived or real failings (Ng, 2020). This tendency to judge can often lead to aggressive behavior and harassment.

4.3.2 Neglect and lack of attention

Online bullying is often linked to neglect and lack of attention. People who feel ignored or underappreciated often seek attention through aggressive behavior. The online space gives them the opportunity to receive quick and direct feedback, which can further encourage aggressive behavior.

4.4 The links between aggression and frustration

When examining the psychological causes of aggression, it is also important to consider the links between frustration and aggression. According to the aggression-frustration hypothesis, frustration is one of the most important triggers of aggression. Frustration is an emotional state, a painful, unpleasant feeling that occurs when one feels hindered in achieving a goal or when one's needs and desires go unmet (Dollard et al, 1939). In the online space, frustration can be caused by several factors that can contribute to aggressive behavior: unavailability and waiting, trolls and provocateurs, lack of recognition, etc.

5 LOW SELF-ESTEEM AND ANXIETY

Social media platforms provide an opportunity to use self-protection mechanisms that can help users to maintain or even enhance their self-worth. However, paradoxically, excessive use of social media can lead to low self-esteem and anxiety. Understanding the psychological causes and consequences of these phenomena is important for promoting digital well-being.

5.1 Social comparison

According to social comparison theory, people tend to compare themselves with others in order to evaluate their own situation and performance (Aronson, Aronson, 2023). In social media, people often encounter idealized and selectively presented lives that create unrealistic expectations. This comparison can lead to low self-esteem as users may perceive their own lives and successes as less than those of others (Vogel, Rose, Roberts, & Eckles, 2014).

5.1.1 Unrealistic expectations

Content on social media platforms often sets unrealistic expectations of beauty, success and lifestyle. These expectations put pressure on users to conform to these standards, which increase anxiety and lowers self-esteem. The phenomena of "Instagram reality" and "Facebook happiness" illustrate this problem (Fardouly, Diedrichs, Vartanian, & Halliwell, 2015).

5.2 FOMO, FOBO, MOMO, FOJI

FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) is a phenomenon in which people fear missing out on something important or fun that is happening in other people's lives. Constant updates and notifications on social media increase this fear, which can cause anxiety and stress (Przybylski, Murayama, DeHaan, & Gladwell, 2013). FOBO (fear of being offline), refers to anxiety about being offline. It is more likely to be caused by missing others' posts in young people and by missing out on communication at work in adults. MOMO (mystery of missing out) describes a distressed, overwhelming feeling caused by the inactivity of people you know online. FOJI (fear of joining in) stems from our own lack of ability to post. It can also be caused by a need to conform, a lack of confidence, a feeling that nothing is happening to us.

5.3 Cyberbullying and negative feedback

Cyberbullying and negative feedback on social media platforms can be a significant contributor to low self-esteem and anxiety. Negative comments, criticisms, and personal attacks can deeply damage people's self-confidence and self-esteem, especially among adolescents and young adults (Kowalski et al, 2014).

5.4 Depression. body image disturbance, sleep disturbance

Low self-esteem and anxiety can contribute directly to the development of depression (Lin et al., 2016). Idealized images and unrealistic expectations on social media can contribute to body image disorders. Users, especially young women, tend to compare themselves to models and influencers seen on social media, which can lead to negative body image and eating disorders (Perloff, 2014).

Excessive use of social media often leads to sleep problems, as users spend a lot of time in front of a screen, especially before bedtime. Sleep deprivation can exacerbate anxiety and depression and negatively affect overall health (Woods & Scott, 2016).

6 COGNITIVE CONSEQUENCES OF EXCESSIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

A growing body of research points to the negative cognitive effects of overuse. This section reviews the various cognitive consequences of excessive use of social media, including effects on attention, memory, sleep and mental health.

Freund (2024) points out that the overstimulation of the brain, the overload of information, has an impact on social and social behavior. This quantitative change has an explosive effect on our brain's information environment, which the brain cannot cope with. MRI scans have shown that in people with Internet addiction, the part of the prefrontal cortex that puts the different events they experience into an emotional context shrinks. He says that emotionally primitive, stripped-down communication leads to mental exhaustion, while the brain's reward center releases more and more dopamine in vain, and the body reduces its effect. This is why we need more and more powerful drugs, and why nutrition and normal sex no longer provide enough satisfaction.

6.1 Attention and concentration

Frequent use of social media often requires multitasking, which divides attention and reduces concentration. According to Ophir, Nass and Wagner (2009), individuals who multitask are less able to selectively pay attention to a task because they frequently switch between different activities. This leads to a dispersion of attention and a decrease in task efficiency.

The constant flow of information from social media can cause information to overload, making it difficult to select and process important information (Bawden & Robinson, 2009). The brain is unable to process large amounts of information efficiently, resulting in reduced attention and cognitive overload.

6.2 Memory and learning

Constant use of social media can affect working memory capacity. The constant flow of notifications and information makes it difficult to form longer-term memories and store short-term information. Research has shown that individuals who frequently switch between tasks, such as viewing social media while working, have poorer working memory (Alloway & Alloway, 2012). Frequent use of social media encourages brief, superficial consumption of information, which can reduce deeper learning and critical thinking skills. According to Carr (2010), constant online presence and adaptation to short attention spans have long-term effects on brain structure and deeper cognitive processes.

6.3 Sleep and cognitive function

Using social media before bedtime negatively affects the quality and quantity of sleep. The blue light emitted by screens interferes with the production of melatonin, which is essential for sleep regulation (Cajochen, 2007). And insufficient sleep has detrimental effects on cognitive functions, including attention, memory and problem-solving ability.

6.4 Cognitive development in young people

Excessive use of social media can be particularly harmful to young people's cognitive development. The developing brain is more susceptible to constant stimulation and multitasking, which can affect attention, memory development and learning skills (Christakis, 2009). Several studies have shown that social media use negatively affects academic performance. According to Junco (2012), social media use reduces academic performance by distracting attention from learning activities and reducing the time spent on learning.

7   SOCIAL ISOLATION

Although social media are designed to facilitate social interaction, paradoxically, excessive use can lead to social isolation. Online interactions cannot replace offline, face-to-face relationships, and excessive online presence can distract attention from fostering real social relationships (Primack et al., 2017). This factor is often more important for our health than how much money we have for prevention, medicine or treatment, whether we have smoked or taken care of our diet (Albert, David, Hajdu, Huszti 2020).

To understand the causes and consequences of youth loneliness, it is essential to examine the impact and evolution of interpersonal and online communication in determining relationships in the light of recent research. As a social phenomenon, loneliness deserves particular attention in this context, as the impact of modern technology and online communication on individual and community relationships can be of a dual nature.

Today, half of adult Americans report feelings of loneliness and isolation, with the highest rates among young adults (Gen, Hammond, 2023)

Some research suggests that online communication can strengthen social relationships, particularly for those who are geographically isolated or have limited opportunities for face-to-face interaction (Shaw & Gant, 2002, Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Social media provide individuals with the opportunity to maintain and nurture relationships and to form new friendships.

More recently, however, a number of studies have highlighted that excessive use of online communication can lead to loneliness (Zsoldos and Ujhelyi, 2022; Szél and Kóródi, 2023). Superficial or intermittent interactions are no substitute for the emotional support provided by deeper, face-to-face relationships (Turkle, 2011; Szécsi, 2022). The 'always online' culture often contributes to a lack of time, which can lead to neglect of face-to-face meetings and shared activities. Furthermore, idealized portrayals of individual lifestyles and successes are common on social media platforms, which can increase anxiety and dissatisfaction in individuals due to social comparison (Chou & Edge, 2012).

8   SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS

Social media platforms are products of consumer society, which rely on our attention, likes and data. While these platforms offer many benefits, such as connectivity and content sharing, they come at a significant cost, both at an individual and societal level. The economics of attention, the desire for likes, the commodification of our data, and the psychological and social impacts are all factors that can be addictive as a main effect.

Paradoxically, social media can both support self-protection mechanisms and cause low self-esteem and anxiety. Social comparison, unrealistic expectations, cyberbullying and the search for recognition all contribute to these problems. Low self-

esteem and anxiety can have serious consequences, including depression, body image disturbances, sleep disturbances and social isolation.

Excessive use of social media can have negative cognitive consequences, including loss of attention and concentration, impaired memory and learning abilities, poor sleep quality and mental health problems.

The social costs of using social media are also significant. Platforms contribute to polarization and social divisions as algorithms display content that reinforces users' existing views. Social media algorithms reinforce the effect of echo chambers that make it difficult to understand and accept different points of view, a process that contributes to heightening political and social tensions.

The lack of anonymity and identifiability has a significant impact on social behavior on social media, generating a range of negative effects, including online harassment, hate speech, trolling and disinformation.

It is important to use social media in moderation and be aware of potential negative effects. Further research is needed to understand how to minimize these negative effects and maximize the positive potential of social media.

8.1 Solution options

There are different strategies for dealing with social media addiction. One of the most effective is mindful use, where users limit their time on social media and use it in a targeted way. Another option is digital detox, which means completely avoiding social media for certain periods of time. Educational programs and psychological counselling can also be effective in treating addiction. This can help to reduce excessive use of social media and promote a focus on offline activities. It is important to increase the length and quality of face-to-face encounters, and, in the case of children, time spent playing together or with family.

Critically evaluating social media content can help reduce the negative effects of social comparison. Users should be aware that social media does not necessarily reflect reality and that the content presented is often idealized and selective.

The operation of social media platforms also raises a number of ethical issues. The transparency of data collection and use, the protection of users' privacy and young people's mental health, and the social responsibility of platforms are all issues that require regulation.

Addressing anonymity is a challenge, but increasing regulation and platform accountability can help reduce these impacts.

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