DIGITAL MIRROR: SOCIAL MEDIA'S INFLUENCE ON YOUTHS SELF-ESTEEM

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of social media on the self-esteem of youth, focusing on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook. The research explores the role of social comparisons, idealized standards, cyberbullying, and the fear of missing out (FOMO) in shaping self-perception and mental well-being. Using a qualitative approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 youths from Selangor, to capture nuanced insights into their experiences with social media. The findings reveal that frequent exposure to curated content and idealized portrayals leads to negative comparisons, feelings of inadequacy, and a decrease in self-esteem, particularly among young women. However, some informants report positive effects, such as inspiration and motivation, from engaging with uplifting content. The study also highlights the importance of coping mechanisms, including mindfulness practices, support networks, and physical activity, in managing the emotional impact of social media. Based on these findings, several recommendations are made: promoting digital literacy to foster critical engagement with social media, encouraging mindfulness to detach from negative comparisons, strengthening support networks, and setting boundaries to limit exposure to harmful content. Additionally, providing access to mental health resources is essential in supporting youth's well-being. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the psychological effects of social media and provides a foundation for interventions aimed at promoting positive self-esteem and mental well-being in the digital age.

Keywords: *Social Media, Self-Esteem, Young Adults, Social Comparison, Cyberbullying, Self Expression*