

Analyzing the Mitigation of the Negative Impact of Passive Social Media Use

Xi Yu^{1,a,*}

¹Faculty of Business, Macau University of Science and Technology, City, Macau, 999078, China
a. 1220033533@student.must.edu.mo

*corresponding author

Abstract: This research examines the adverse effects of passive social media usage on the subjective well-being of young individuals in the digital era, where social media is closely integrated into everyday life. The opening portion establishes the context by examining the profound alterations in communication and social exchanges resulting from the digital age. The next focal point is passive engagement with social media, defined as non-participatory behaviors, and its prevalence among young users. It specifically seeks to explore the effects of passive use on well-being in terms of diminished self-esteem, increased loneliness, anxiety, and depression, thereby filling an unaddressed gap in the literature. The presented research recognizes the importance of understanding the processes that underpin these effects and presents methods to reduce them. The article suggests interventions at multiple levels (individual, community, and policy) focusing on educational efforts, platform redesign, and broad public awareness campaigns. The role of key stakeholders—educators, parents, and policymakers—as architects for youth's effective mode of digital navigation is underscored.

Keywords: Social media, passive use, subjective well-being, digital landscape

1. Introduction

In an era where people are increasingly reliant on digital devices, researchers are probing how social media impacts the young, contemporary generation. This introduction's task is to provide a comprehensive comprehension of the existing utilization and consequences of social media, with an emphasis on young people's inactive engagement. The paper starts by reviewing how the digital era has changed individuals' ways of interacting, communicating, and consuming information. This survey offers a full framework for greater understanding of young people's lives being affected by social media, as well as social media's psychological and societal consequences.

Teenagers' use of social media is changing considerably in the new digital era, where usage has become more passive and less interactive. Passive use is generally understood as scanning one's feed and scrolling through others' activities with no actual activities involved. While these changes detected by Beyens et al. introduce some important notions about the teen's psychological and social needs, Passive social networking sites refer to the act of viewing others' statuses, newsfeeds, profiles, pictures, or otherwise being an online spectator on social networks. Online lurking is another phrase closely related to passive social networking [1]. Alternatively, there is "diving," in which users immerse themselves in social networking sites' environments by consuming or looking at media without producing or giving any of their own contents [2]. Long-term survey data applies to adults in

China. In the last two years, following retailer cyber-attacks, it has been shown that social media platforms, particularly TikTok and QQ, have become the most common sources known to teenagers for gaining knowledge on potential hazards. The volume of such communications has massively risen [3]. This study examines passive social media use, where users consume content without actively engaging with it. In this paper, it will delve into the specifics of this kind of use and examine how frequently it occurs among young people. By examining current studies, surveys, and other data, this essay will provide a comprehensive account of the phenomenon and how it differs from active social media use. Although there is existing data, more studies are needed to understand how much passive use can make the young people feel less satisfied. Happiness, life satisfaction, and mental health are all sorts of subjective wellbeing indicators that are good indicators of someone's overall quality of life.

The focus of this research topic is to observe if there is any relationship between the passive use of social media platforms and harmful psychological outcomes such as lower self-esteem, higher loneliness, and higher depression and anxiety rates. There are also distinctions between the effects of passive social media use and active social media use, which is also discussed in this article so that it can be known more clearly about the consequences of passive use.

The objective of this study is to reveal the processes by which passive social networking leads to negative consequences in early teenagers and to investigate potentially promising interventions that can moderate the negative impacts. This objective is important because it advances that the knowledge on the consequences of the digital terrain for young people and the design of interventions to encourage more benign social media behavior. This study aims to address a variety of solutions at the individual, community, and policy levels, including educational programs, platform design enhancements, and public awareness campaigns. The role of various stakeholders, such as schools, parents, and legislators, in encouraging young people to navigate the internet safely and effectively will also be highlighted.

2. Case Description

In recent years, a great number of social media platforms have been integrated with games, live streaming, long and short movies, music, and other pan-entertainment enterprises among young people. Minors in the developmental stage, on the other hand, have a lower knowledge of discriminating and self-restraint, as well as the associated skills, so they are more vulnerable to Internet threats than adults. According to the poll, the scope of adolescent Internet use is growing, and there is an increasing amount of research on it [1]. According to the results of the province's adolescent Internet use survey, more than 42.7% of teens surf the Internet for more than three hours per day, with 47.7% of teenagers under the age of three using the Internet at night. The proportion was 71.1 percent [1].

Nowadays, as online games gain popularity among the general public, the online gaming market is steadily heating up. The growth of internet games is well underway, and a massive gaming industry chain has emerged. Currently, the development of online gaming has a diverse tendency. The online game itself is highly appealing; it allows the user to receive immediate feedback. The more teenagers play the game, the better they get at it, and as a result, more players have fun and like it. The virtual game character design, complex game narrative and tasks, numerous game reward mechanisms, and game social system all appeal to young people who are immature and lack self-control, making it difficult for them to resist the lure of online games. Teenagers find it even easier to lose themselves in games and receive positive feedback from online gaming that is not available in real life if it comes along with learning difficulties, criticism, rejection by peers, and other issues.

Of course, not everyone is like this; in many cases, internet games are simply a means of enjoyment and stress relief. Contemporary youth have great learning capacities and may quickly learn and master

an internet game. They will become more reliant on online game live streaming and media at the same time. In life, more youths have joined the so-called "phubbing tribe." Their hands are inseparable from their mobile phones, and they spend a lot of money on game upgrades or reward anchors. Furthermore, robbing parents' money in order to supplement and reward them is a swindle. The pattern of passive social media use among adolescents represents a new view of social connection and connectivity in contemporary culture. They realize and encounter social interactions via social media; however, being passive spectators hinders them from fulfilling the sense of belonging and gratification they get from these platforms [4]. This inclination is a reflection of a more extensive social and cultural change in the digital era, where passively engaging with others' virtual experiences has become a habitual matter. The negative implications of teenagers using social media passively to fulfill their social needs on their mental health, social functioning, and subjective well-being are significant. Thus, it is significant to identify these effects and prepare strategies to deter these damages and establish a safer and more enjoyable social media space for young people.

3. Analysis on the Problems

3.1. Psychological Factors Influencing Passive Social Media Use

Zhang et al. in 2018 illustrated various intricate psychological factors behind people's passive usage of social media [3]. Social motivation, fear of missing out (FOMO), and approval motivation are a few of the emotional and social motives that predominate human behaviors [3]. They simply use social media continually to avoid their feelings of exclusion from FOMO. By doing so, the platforms help to fulfill this purpose, but this usually leads to lower consumption of active or interactive content [3]. How the personality traits show noticeable variability among their consumptions [5] To illustrate, those who are more introverted may find it easier to stand on the sidelines and watch people chat, while those with social anxiety might find this method more natural. Perfectionists may take the passive road to avoid the dangers of active engagement. These traits are intertwined with the impact social media has on individual mental health. Those whose personality profiles consist of traits that make them more prone to passive engagement might find themselves spending more time on social media instead of having real-life conversations with friends and family.

Inactivity on social media leads to significant effects on one's mental health. Over time, these effects can make their way into an individual's reality as symptoms such as isolation, worthlessness, and low self-esteem. Forcing users to witness only the most impressive moments of other users' lives leads to users feeling inferior and having inaccurate presumptions about what life is. This is a major issue with vulnerable demographics such as teenagers and young adults, for it creates intense emotions of difference and uselessness. Additionally, mental health is added to the list because the lack of active participation and genuine human communication leaves one feeling empty and dissatisfied.

3.2. Technological and Design Influences on Passive Social Media Use

When it comes to passive engagement with social media, the tech and design features of a platform greatly affect user behavior. These features affect how much and how intensely people are involved with social media.

The analysis of Krause and others underscored the importance of social media design and algorithms when it comes to impacting and understanding user behavior [6]. They assess the impacts of technology and design on passive social media use [6]. These platforms are developed specifically to favor user engagement and are personalized through algorithmic means. The goal is to make users satisfied and mindlessly engaged by algorithmically scanning their data points to make the content just right. There are few platforms' people desire to visit for hours or want to stay active on. Instead,

people become hooked on scrolling through feeds and passively grazing. Good platforms will manipulate subtly, changing people's behavior with the slow addition of "notification" features that improve passive uses of the site. Good platforms use sophisticated algorithms that manipulate and predict people into long periods of passive browsing.

One of the most evident design elements that reduces user engagement is the ubiquitous "infinite scroll" module, deeply embedded within multiple platforms. Following the feature's structure, information continuously flows without clear breaks between paragraphs. The constant addition of new content in the process of people's browsing might easily lead to involuntarily wasting more time without noticing. Furthermore, such a structure not only economically triggers your curiosity and occurrence to keep going but also constructs "engagement traps." Based on auto play videos and suggested content, those traps apply deceptive ways to engage individuals without active participation. Because there is no clear exit mechanism presented in the application, people would prefer aimless browsing for an extended period of time. Notifications and alerts are social media design musts that trigger a passive act.

3.3. Sociocultural Influences on Passive Social Media Use

To truly understand these cultural and sociological implications, a more nuanced framework for comprehending how social media molds people's beliefs and behaviors is necessary. Increasingly, platforms are becoming the place where people engage with cultural content: music, art, and entertainment. Through consuming this content via algorithms, users do culture in a very different way from the days of yore when one had to find and select one's culture. Furthermore, social media simply frames larger cultural narratives and trends to be passively consumed by users. In an age of globally available media and, thus, a seemingly endless array of cultures and ideas, how an individual "does" culture can dramatically mold an individual's likes, attitudes, and how one invents identity.

The research done by Yuna et al. highlights that social media platforms are an important homestead for news, amusement, and social interaction in contemporary society [7]. The ambition to stay connected and well-informed at all times influences user behavior and fits societal expectations [7]. The paper highlights the ability of platforms to enable cross-cultural communication and examines the intricate relationship among cultural psychology and neuroscience. Users usually have a curious desire to be notified about the continuous stream of information, which yields an intense bias in the direction of consuming social media content passively. Yuna and friends attempt to highlight the far-reaching impact of social media in modern society and its cardinal role in disseminating and preserving cultural norms and ideas [7]. The paper sets out to discuss how passive participation in social media shapes acceptance and reinforcement of cultural norms, especially amid a varied user demographic [7].

4. Suggestion

4.1. Suggestions for Psychological Influences

Platforms might prevent passive surfing by including reminders that encourage active engagement. Questions or challenges relating to the topic could be included in these, encouraging individuals to think, share, or have fruitful discussions. This technique has the potential to make mindless scrolling far more engaging. Introducing features to monitor usage: Features that reveal patterns of use can be integrated into social media networks. A 'time spent' tracker that notifies users when they go over a certain amount of passive browsing time is one example of a tool that can help with self-regulation. An element like this can make people more conscious of social media and make them utilize it more intentionally [8].

Although personalized content has its benefits, algorithms might be adjusted to provide a balanced mix of material that aligns with user preferences while still showcasing diverse perspectives and interactive features. As a result, individuals will be more likely to engage with varied information, and the echo chamber effect will be lessened.

Altering the boundless scrolling and automatic playback features can lead to organic disruptions in the user's interaction. Implementing periodic reminders or pauses, such as displaying a message recommending a break or highlighting various platform capabilities, can interrupt continuous passive scrolling and motivate users to halt and contemplate their usage. More customizable notification options could reduce over-monitoring of social media by giving users greater control over what and when they are alerted. Customizable notification settings may reduce unnecessary interruptions and passive engagement from alerts coming in all the time.

Platforms can deliver information to, and educate users about, digital wellbeing, much like cigarette packets with their gruesome messages about smoking. By providing educational material or tips on how to use social media well in situ, users can be helped to understand the negative consequences of passive use and may be motivated to change. Designing for Meaningful Interactions: Enhancing features that enable community building, group chats, or shared interests and annihilation of common enemies can help shift from passive content consumption to active participation and meaningful interaction with other people.

4.2. Suggestions for Technological and Design Influences

If people were to overcome these difficulties, they must increase awareness and education about the psychological ramifications of social media through the integration of tools into the social media platforms themselves that perhaps encourage mindfulness and consideration of usage patterns. Furthermore, setting up environments (either digital or physical) that enforce more authentic social connection and engagement could lessen the need to seek passive validation and belonging through social media platforms. Maybe setting up digital platforms or mechanisms that encourage active participation and interaction as opposed to zombie-like consumption would be useful. To meet the requirements of people with certain personalities, including social anxiety or introversion, it is needed to fill the needs of the individual. If social media experiences could be switched to support more inclusive, diverse, extensive, and personalized modes of participation, this would be very helpful for people who are comfortable and wary in different situations. It could mean limited or extensive involvement on these platforms.

In addition to the issue of impacting the barrier of perception, there is the effect that passively taking part in social media has on one's mental aspect. Notable examples of these interventions that would have to be undertaken to make this work would be: digital detoxing initiatives, promoting healthy work-life balance, and mental health services, all of which should be targeted to younger groups (adolescents and young adults), as they are more likely to be partaking in passive viewing.

It requires a more holistic approach that accounts for the emotional and social drivers, as well as the personality traits, as well as what types of mental health problems this could lead to. One large aspect of this would be understanding and mitigating the amount of FOMO (fear of missing out) someone has in them, as well as the need for social approval and the need for social validation, all of which cause a large amount of passive use [4]. All of these tend to get people to kind of passively scrawl through to see if they can feel like they are spending time with friends, as well as receive validation as they are doing it.

4.3. Suggestions for Sociocultural Influences

To reduce the impact of sociocultural influences, individual behavior and societal attitudes toward engagement must be manipulated. A culture that supports the intentional and mindful use of social media may be beneficial. This means, rather than mindlessly scrolling through social media, teaching civilians to be selective in their use. To aid in this shift, it may be important to implement educational campaigns and initiatives to push for digital literacy and responsible social media use. Such policies aim to educate users on the importance of maintaining a balance between online and offline activities and to prioritize quality over quantity in digital interactions. [9]

Promoting consumer engagement and the ability to critically evaluate cultural content and information should be an objective pursued as well. It may be necessary, in order to avoid the echo-chamber logic that sometimes undermines the applications of algorithmic personalization, to make sure that on these platforms the user is confronted with a diverse range of conflicting perspectives. Active engagement in cultural discourse and innovation, as opposed to passive consumption, should be nurtured in order to achieve a more well-rounded and fulfilling experience on these social media platforms [10].

In addition, social media platforms have a major opportunity to intentionally curate and offer content that educates and enriches while also entertaining. Platforms have agency in actively shaping cultural norms and values by featuring and promoting content that advances tolerance, diversity, inclusivity, critical thinking, and so on. To address the sociocultural factors that make users passive in using social media, it is necessary to work for social changes that alter the normalized practices of being online all the time, increase the social consciousness of people about digital technology, teach people to critically "use" digital culture, and make discussions on social media more active and multi-polar. This strategy can promote a more robust and well-rounded relationship with social media by giving users the ability to actively shape their digital experience rather than letting it shape them passively.

5. Conclusion

There are several restrictions on helping kids stop the Internet completely. This paper used to believe that the Internet would bring people tragedy, but it has instead brought convenience and efficiency, food delivery, online shopping, shared bikes, and video conversations. If it had been prohibited, there would have been no flowering. Games should be considered both entertainment and stress release. Behind the network is a massive industrial chain that requires a large amount of capital and, in the end, generates enormous economic benefits, making significant contributions to the national economy and people's lives. Furthermore, this economic chain creates a large number of jobs, including game production companies, game peripheral product companies, game anchors and operation firms, and game-related supporting sectors, all of which have an impact on societal stability.

The study of passive social media use paints a complex picture of how digital platforms created to fascinate and engage can unintentionally lead to patterns of use that harm mental health and overall life happiness. Passive use, defined as non-interactive, observation-based information consumption, has been associated with worse subjective well-being, which manifests as feelings of inadequacy, loneliness, and increased worry. This is particularly prevalent among young people, who are at a key phase of individual and social development and are big users of online social media. The issue's complexity is underlined in the analysis, influenced both by technical design and psychological predispositions and by social environment and cultural context. The distinction between passive and active social media use and their association with different well-being outcomes is particularly striking. Active use is related to higher connectedness and self-expression, and in some cases, higher

self-esteem, while passive use can have negative consequences as it doesn't involve meaningful interaction and typically involves a lot of upward social comparison.

The results of this study have important implications for future research and practice. There is a need for more research into the long-term impacts of passive social media use, especially as digital platforms advance. Research should also look into the effectiveness of various intervention measures, both at the individual and societal levels, in promoting healthier social media behaviors.

For practitioners, whether mental health professionals, educators, or policymakers, these findings provide a framework for developing and implementing solutions to mitigate the negative impacts of passive social media use. This involves launching awareness campaigns, incorporating digital well-being into educational curricula, and campaigning for improvements to social media platform design and policies.

In the future, studies will begin with the restriction of online gaming, which is only a reduction in the network's ecological regulation. In the long run, regulatory authorities must strengthen supervision and refine existing measures, and platforms and enterprises must help children puzzle and grow with "purpose" in game development, network application design, and other areas, such as cultivating children's collaborative ability and requiring joint completion of offline tasks to achieve online upgrades. At the same time, parents should provide their children with more in-person companionship.

Finally, this review emphasizes the importance of working together to overcome the issues brought about by passive social media use. Promoting a healthier digital future necessitates a balanced strategy that acknowledges the benefits of social media while also minimizing its perils. It encourages collaboration among multiple stakeholders—users, social media firms, mental health specialists, educators, and policymakers—to build a digital environment that promotes and improves users' subjective well-being.

References

- [1] Beyens, I., Frison, E., & Eggermont, S. (2020). "I don't want to miss a thing": Adolescents' fear of missing out and its relationship to adolescents' social needs, Facebook use, and Facebook related stress. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 64, 1-8.
- [2] Chen Hanhang (2021). *A study on the relationship between social media use and fear of missing out and online social anxiety among adolescents —Take Changsha in Hunan Province as an example A Dissertation Submitted for the Degree of Master*
- [3] Zhang, W., Jiang, F., Zhu, Y., & Zhang, Q. (2023). Risks of passive use of social network sites in youth athletes: A moderated mediation analysis. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, Article 1219190.
- [4] Chen S, Shao B-J, Zhi K-Y (2019) Examining the effects of passive WeChat use in China. *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction* 35(17): 1630–1644.
- [5] *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*. (2023). *Impact of Social Media Design on User Behavior*. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 28(1).
- [6] Greenspoon PJ, Saklofske DH (2001) Toward an integration of subjective well-being and psychopathology. *Social Indicators Research* 54(1): 81–108.
- [7] Yuna, D., Liu, X., Li, J., & Han, L. (2022). *Cross-Cultural Communication on social media: Review From the Perspective of Cultural Psychology and Neuroscience*. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 858900.
- [8] Frison E, Eggermont S (2020) Toward an integrated and differential approach to the relationships between loneliness, different types of Facebook use, and adolescents' depressed mood. *Communication Research* 47(5): 701–728.
- [9] Carr CT, Wohn DY, Hayes RA (2016) As social support: relational closeness, automaticity, and interpreting social support from paralinguistic digital affordances in social media. *Computers in Human Behavior* 62: 385–393.
- [10] Gignac GE, Szodorai ET (2016) Effect size guidelines for individual differences researchers. *Personality and Individual Differences* 102: 74–78.