

**Social Media, A silent mental hologram and the ‘new crack cocaine’ of the digital age:
An exploration into the use of social media, its effects on mental health and the sustained impact
on young adults (aged 18 to 25) within the era of Generation Z.**

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Abstract

Technology and social media platforms are continuously developing which means we are now more digitally connected than ever before. Our heavy reliance on social media sites can have seriously challenging and unnerving effects on a young person’s mental wellbeing, creating feelings of inclusion and exclusion. It is fair to say that social media interaction can become a dangerously competitive trend. There is a strong connection between excessive usage of social media, and what is now developing into a personal reliance which is influencing human behavior to the extent that we are analyzing all forms of personal online activities which are prone to creating a stressful and competitive endurance where people begin to experience and become unaware of the hidden negative frailties that exist with excessive usage. This has triggered medical concerns and researched findings which relate to mental health, is what would be described as a silent mental hologram and the ‘new crack cocaine’ of the digital age.

This paper focuses on the effects of social media on young adults aged 18-25 and its links to depression. This can go unrecognized and therefore contribute significantly to mental health disorders. The findings reviewed would suggest that there is considerable over usage, and we are becoming a generation that is too reliant on technology, and it would appear that our own thoughts and decision-making values are being eroded. We are allowing ourselves to become a serf of social media. The methods measuring people’s mental health research are extremely difficult as we are attempting to understand the complexities of online human behavior combined with time usage on social media, and the relevance of linguistic usage which tend to portray depressive tendencies particularly in Twitter as this was our more suitable platform to investigate.

There is no doubt social media will continue to challenge us with technology and bring us into the combat zone of data-analysis and self-worth on a constant basis, however if we recognize that social media is a tool for technical development and business needs, our self-worth values and thought processes can remain outside of the jurisdiction of social media. While we are so caught up in quantifying data and measuring up to self-worth, we cannot see whether social media is becoming beneficial or detrimental to our health. We continue to move forward because the ‘S’ in *Social Media* does not give us the opportunity to stop. We begin to now realize that while social media can have positive attributes, people are now being ushered into biological support areas in mental health as a result of over usage. There are also complex legal issues that need to be resolved to assist Generation Z. Users are currently experiencing their own constant participation is analysis of data and are buying into the frenzied social media cycle of competitiveness and instant gratification which continues to generate a high dependence of new speculation and review. This is feeding into noticeable difficulties with coping skills, sedentary behaviours, low confidence levels, image depletion and yearning to establish inclusion at a self-rating scale in this ever evolving technical world.