



REVIEW ARTICLES


The impact of Facebook content on mental health status among Generation Z: A literature review

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Abstract

The rise of digital media has transformed how Generation Z (Gen Z) interacts, communicates, and accesses information. Though digital platforms offer benefits such as connectivity, education, and entertainment, their impact on mental health has raised concerns. Research reveals a complex relationship between digital media use and Gen Z's mental well-being. Social media such as Facebook can provide opportunities for social support and self-expression but is also linked to anxiety, depression, cyberbullying, and self-image disorders. However, limited review study evaluates the impact of Facebook on mental health status of Gen Z population. This study evaluates the influence of Facebook on Gen Z's mental health. A literature review was conducted using databases include Google Scholar, PubMed, and Scopus, focusing on articles published between 2020 and 2024 in English and Indonesian. Findings suggest that adolescents' use of Facebook promote self-expression and social support, but it can also trigger mental health problems. Problematic internet use is also associated with loneliness and maladaptive coping styles. Although some psychoeducation-based interventions have been conducted, there is a need for further studies to develop more specific approaches to prevent the psychological distress among Gen Z.

Keywords: Community nurses, Facebook, Generation Z, innovation strategies, mental health issues

Introduction

Mental health refers to a state of well-being where an individual can realize their potential, cope with everyday stress, work productively, and contribute positively to their community (Wren-Lewis & Alexandrova, 2021). Mental health is crucial for Generation Z (Gen Z) as it enables them to thrive and reach their full potential (Park et al., 2024). Prioritizing mental well-being can develop resilience to address life's challenges and promote positive relationships (Ramalho et al., 2023). Good mental health also impacts their physical health, happiness, and overall quality of life that setting them up for success (Gautam et al., 2024). Gen Z who born between 1996 and 2010 is known to value diversity, desire social change, love to share, and focus on achieving goals (Talmon, 2019). Given their tech-savvy nature and affinity for digital communication, it's no surprise that social media plays a significant role in their lives (Elkatmış, 2024). Social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook (**Figure 1**), WhatsApp, and TikTok are the platforms most frequently used by teenagers or Gen Z today (Tirocchi, 2024). Social media has become an integral part of Gen Z's daily life as the main means of communication (Pujiono, 2021). Research reveals that 60% of Gen Z individuals initiate their social interactions online, and a significant 70% prefer online communication with friends (Yulya et al., 2022). This reliance on digital platforms can have implications for their mental well-being that making it essential to consider its potential impact (Balcombe & De Leo, 2022). Mental health problems in the world are experienced by adults and teenagers (Schlack et al., 2021). World Health Organization (WHO) reported that 1 in 5 teenagers globally experience mental health disorders (Amaltinga & Mbinta, 2020). According to the Indonesian Basic Health Research (Riset Kesehatan Dasar), the prevalence of mental health disorders among the Indonesian population rose from 6% in 2013 to 9.8% in 2018 that indicating a significant increase over the five-year period (Handayani et al., 2020).

Many studies have explored the impact of digital media on Gen Z's mental health, however aspects of specific content types, usage duration, and consumption patterns on psychological well-being remain unclear. Further research is needed to investigate the effects of cultural, economic, and gender differences, along with the long-term impact of early media exposure (Purwanto et al., 2023). This highlights the need for further research into the impact of social media (such as Facebook) on young people, particularly in understanding how it influences their mindset, attitudes, and behavior in



Figure 1. Facebook (Courtesy of www.unsplash.com).

social life (Moroney et al., 2023). The use of Facebook has positive benefits, for example making it easier for individuals to search for information or share useful information, increasing creativity, and increasing social networks (Wu, 2023). However, it can have negative consequences if not used properly. For instance, intensive social media use among teenagers has been linked to the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) phenomenon (Utami & Aviani, 2021). Understanding the impact of Facebook content on the mental health status of this demographic has become a pressing concern (Cudo et al., 2019). Despite the growing body of research on social media's impact on mental health, several gaps exist in the current literature. Firstly, many studies have focused on the general population that leaving a knowledge gap regarding the specific experiences and vulnerabilities of Gen Z

individuals. Secondly, previous research has often examined social media use broadly, without delving into the nuances of specific platforms like Facebook or the types of content that may be particularly influential in mental health. Therefore, this present review seeks to address these gaps by providing an in-depth examination of the relationship between Facebook content and mental health outcomes among Gen Z individuals globally.

The implications of this review are far-reaching and have significant relevance for Gen Z populations. As social media continues to play an increasingly prominent role in daily life, understanding its impact on mental health is essential for promoting healthy development and well-being. The recent review has the potential to thrive in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. Shedding light on the relationship between Facebook content and mental health can help stakeholders promote healthy online interactions among young people worldwide. Furthermore, this literature review is crucial for several reasons. Gen Z is a unique demographic that has grown up with social media, and their experiences and perceptions of online content may differ significantly from those of older generations (Chan & Lee, 2023). Also, Facebook remains one of the most widely used social media platforms globally, with billions of active users (Dixon, 2025). Finally, the findings of this review can contribute to the development of evidence-based interventions and policies related to mental health among Gen Z. Moreover, policymakers, educators, and mental health professionals can utilize the insights gained from this review to create supportive environments that address resilience.

Method

This study chose literature review design to synthesize existing research, identify patterns and gaps, and provide an overview of the current state of knowledge on the topic (Leite et al., 2019). The design is appropriate for this topic because it enables the synthesis of existing research on the impact of Facebook content on mental health among Gen Z. Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses (PRISMA) method was used to perform a literature search (Moher et al., 2009). The Scopus, PubMed, and Google Scholar databases were searched using the following key words: 'Anxiety', 'Depression', 'Internet', 'Mental Health', 'Smartphone', 'Facebook', and 'Social Support'. Inclusion criteria were articles in English, relevant to the Facebook and mental health among Gen Z or teenagers, studies using quantitative and qualitative design, and articles published between 2020 and 2024. The exclusion criteria were studies not describing Facebook and mental health. In a rigorous and systematic approach, two researchers, NAY and RTA, meticulously extracted eligible data from each selected article. They utilized a standardized data extraction table designed to capture key information, including the author and year of publication, its design, the sample characteristics, and the primary findings. This structured method ensured consistency and comprehensiveness in data collection. To further enhance the reliability and accuracy of the extracted information, each article underwent a thorough cross-checking process. This involved NAY and RTA independently verifying the extracted data against the original content of the article, allowing them to critically evaluate the relevance of each piece of information and resolve any discrepancies, thereby strengthening the overall integrity of the dataset. The results are then presented in the form of a narrative of the findings. The initial search yielded 340 articles. After assessing duplicate articles, 31 articles were excluded. After assessing the titles and abstracts of 309 articles, 225 articles were excluded because they did not match the titles and abstracts. A full text review was

conducted on 84 articles. Of these, 74 articles were excluded because they did not meet the inclusion criteria. A total of 10 articles were included in the final analysis (**Figure 2**).

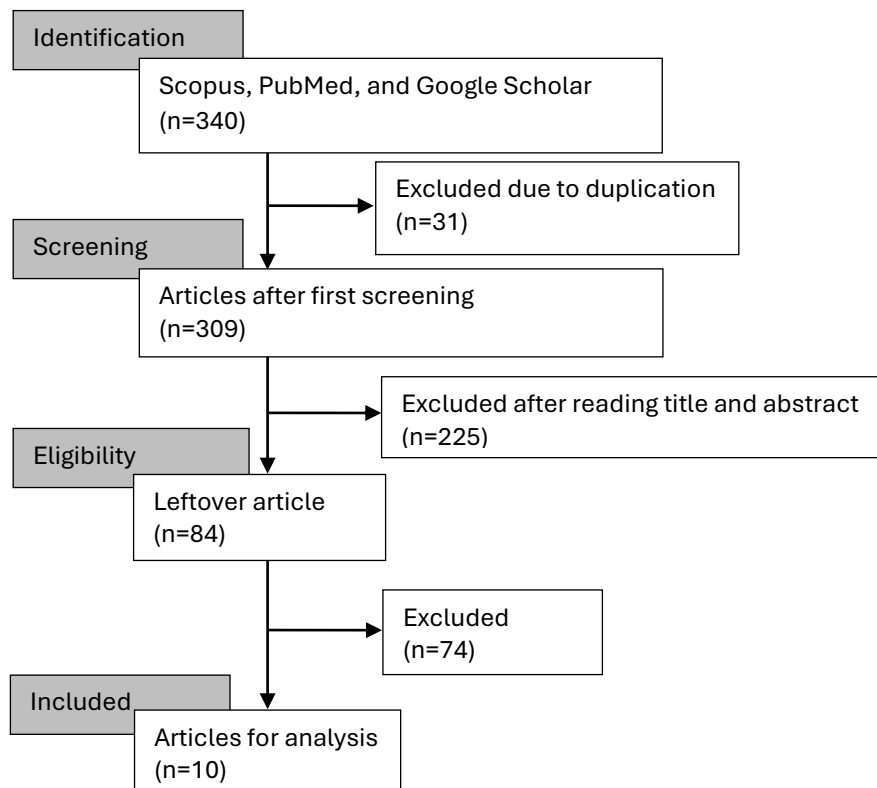


Figure 2. Study selection process according to the PRISMA flow diagram.

Results

A total of 10 articles were selected for this analysis which various study design to collect the complete perspectives (**Table 1**). The characteristics of this study involved adolescent participants and was conducted in the United States, Europe, Asia, Colombia, and Vietnam with diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. In addition, this study uses a mixed approach using observation in one of the community groups on Facebook related to perceptions of anxiety and mental health due to excessive exposure to media content. Most studies highlighted that excessive interaction with Facebook or other social media can lead to mental health problems, such as anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and other related distress.

Discussion

The review highlighted that Facebook serves as a space for communication, self-expression, and social interaction. However, different content types can trigger varied emotional and cognitive responses (Keles et al., 2020). Understanding these effects will provide mental health support for adolescents by reducing loneliness and connecting them with peers who share similar experiences (Smith et al., 2023). Facebook groups often feature emotional content that can offer support but may also reinforce negative feelings if consumed excessively (Pera, 2020). Youth with mental illness may seek help online but risk exposure to harmful content like self-harm images and unrealistic body standards, which can worsen self-esteem, anxiety, and depression (Kostyrka-Allchorne et al., 2023). Besides having positive effects, overexposure to negative news can trigger anxiety, stress, sleep disturbances, and exacerbate mental conditions such as depression (Molina & Rojas, 2024). It can also shape a more pessimistic view of the world (Dam et al., 2023). Therefore, it is important to limit the consumption of negative content to maintain mental health (Popat & Tarrant, 2023). Social comparison and digital pressure can exacerbate mental health symptoms such as lower self-esteem (Cai et al., 2023). Media content in Facebook can affect adolescents emotionally in the short term, such as triggering anxiety or improving social interactions (Molina & Rojas, 2024). In the long term, exposure to negative content can worsen mental health and shape negative self-perceptions due to unrealistic standards (Smith et al., 2023). Self-presentation and self-curation on social media involve

managing online identities by sharing content to create a desired image (Velasco et al., 2020). Though this can improve social perception, it may also cause anxiety and feelings of inadequacy through social comparison (Dam et al., 2023).

Table 1. Study findings.

Authors, year	Study design	Participants	Key findings
Popat & Tarrant, 2023	Qualitative study	Adolescents	Self-validation, self-expression, and social media lead to anxiety and low self-esteem
Smith et al., 2023	Scoping review	Adolescents	Facebook and Instagram useful for recruiting adolescents in mental health research
Keles et al., 2020	Systematic review	Adolescents	Social media use is linked to depression, anxiety, and distress
Kostyrka-Allchorne et al., 2023	Observational study	Adolescents	Adolescents with clinical mental health conditions experience both positive and negative effects from digital media
Cai et al., 2023	Meta-analysis	Adolescents	Problematic internet use (PIU) is linked to depression, anxiety, and loneliness
Velasco et al., 2020	Systematic review	Adolescents	Stigma and negative perceptions of mental health services are major barriers to adolescents seeking help. Meanwhile, positive past experiences, trusted adult support, and good mental health literacy encourage help-seeking
Molina & Rojas, 2024	Qualitative study	Adolescents	The use social media impact body image and anxiety
Moroney et al., 2023	Survey study	Adolescents	The frequent digital media use is linked to increased mental illness and substance use
Pera, 2020	Literature review	Adolescents	The social anxiety increases internet addiction, loneliness, and maladaptive coping styles
Dam et al., 2023	Observational study	Adolescents	The study found a strong correlation social media use and stress, anxiety, and negative emotional

Given the negative impact of social media discussed earlier, the function of mental health nurses is essential in assisting adolescents facing mental health challenges (Kumar et al., 2020). They offer thorough care and guidance to aid these young individuals in overcoming their difficulties (Costa et al., 2022). In addition to conventional therapeutic methods, nurses are instrumental in monitoring risks associated with harmful content. For example, cyberbullying, online harassment, and exposure to unrealistic and unhealthy standards on social media. Through this approach, they can help adolescents manage their digital media consumption as it does not worsen their mental condition. Nurses can inform adolescents and their families about healthy digital practices, assist them in developing strategies to critically assess online content, and promote responsible engagement with social media (Wilandika et al., 2023). Furthermore, mental health nurses can encourage open conversations regarding the potential effects of digital media on mental health, creating a safe and supportive atmosphere where adolescents feel at ease discussing their worries. Incorporating digital literacy and risk management into their care strategies can deliver comprehensive support that addresses the intricate relationship between mental health and digital media usage (Chen et al., 2024). This approach can help adolescents dealing with mental health challenges when interacting with social media.

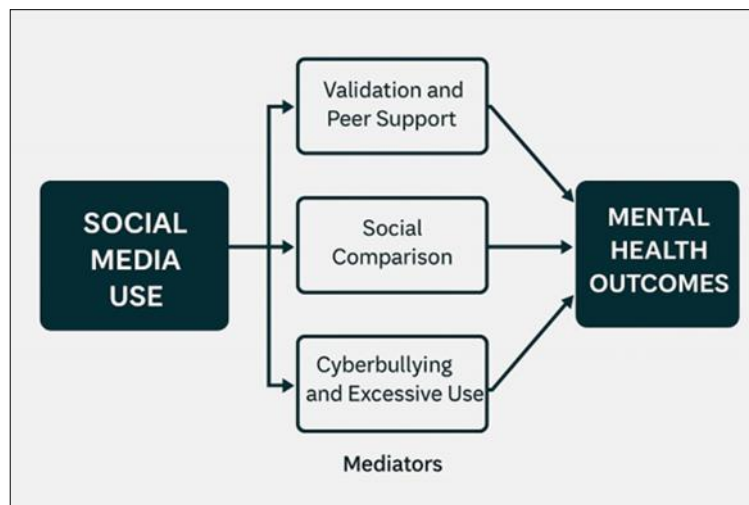


Figure 3. The impact of Facebook or social media use.

Teenagers today are increasingly exposed to portrayals of others on social media that leading to frequent comparisons with peers or influencers (Moroney et al., 2023). When they feel they fall short of these perceived standards, it can trigger feelings of inadequacy and even Imposter Syndrome (Keles et al., 2020). Mental health nurses help prevent Imposter Syndrome through psychoeducation, counseling, and emotional support to improve confidence and mental health (Bravata et al., 2020). Facebook content can negatively impact mental health by promoting unrealistic comparisons, increasing stress, and lowering self-esteem, potentially leading anxiety and depression (Cai et al., 2023). Their challenges in self-regulation and managing digital engagement increase the risk of deteriorating mental health over time (Cai et al., 2023). Conversely, resilience can be promoted through positive digital interactions that providing

temporary relief and aid in coping (Kostyrka-Allchorne et al., 2023). The review also generated a figure as a path diagram illustrating the relationship between social media use activities and mental health conditions in Gen Z (**Figure 3**).

Excessive social media use increases the risk of exposure to negative content and cyberbullying, which can exacerbate stress and anxiety. In addition, mental fatigue and sleep disturbances resulting from overuse exacerbate these negative impacts, affecting adolescents' mental health (Smith et al., 2023). Growing up in the digital era, Gen Z faces both vulnerability and resilience in mental health (Popat & Tarrant, 2023). Although they are exposed to anxiety and social media pressure, many are also open to seeking help and building online support (Kostyrka-Allchorne et al., 2023). The pressure to appear perfect often leads to harmful social comparisons, lowering self-esteem and intensifying anxiety (Popat & Tarrant, 2023). This dynamic increases the risk of mental health issues, particularly among adolescents and young adults (Molina & Rojas, 2024). Social media can worsen anxiety and depression in Gen Z by promoting unrealistic comparisons and adding stress from the pressure to stay connected (Cai et al., 2023). Comparisons of life based on achievement are often seen in academic, career or social success (Molina & Rojas, 2024). High achievers tend to feel more confident and valued by their surroundings and vice versa, those who feel less successful may experience feelings of inferiority and stress (Pera, 2020). Social media (e.g. Facebook) has a huge impact on social comparison and body image, especially in women, where they often feel dissatisfied with their bodies after comparing themselves to a seemingly perfect idealized image (Popat & Tarrant, 2023). Unhealthy media content can encourage the need for social validation, where individuals seek recognition through what they share or consume. This reliance on external validation risks exacerbating anxiety and depression, especially when the expected response is not met (Molina & Rojas, 2024). Adolescents are especially vulnerable due to their sensitivity to social judgment, creating a cycle of insecurity, dissatisfaction, and declining mental health (Moroney et al., 2023). Gen Z adolescents are vulnerable to mental health problems due to factors like stigma, low mental health knowledge, and social pressure that can prevent them from seeking help (Velasco et al., 2020). The role of family is critical in supporting communication, managing stress, and limiting the negative impact of social media through supervision and mediation (Pera, 2020).

This review also emphasized that struggles with self-regulation increase symptom risk (Kostyrka-Allchorne et al., 2023). Resilience involves the ability to adapt and recover from stress, with social support, coping strategies and positive self-regulation reducing the negative impact of vulnerability (Pera, 2020). Observations in a Facebook group predominantly consisting of Gen Z members revealed a negative correlation due to exposure to achievement-oriented content on LinkedIn (**Figure 4**). This exposure, showcasing peers' accomplishments at a young age, triggered feelings of anxiety, depression, and inferiority among group members. Comments like "What a clumsy skill" and "real, what a clumsy skill" highlight a correlation between consuming social media content and the rise of insecurity and low self-esteem among Gen Z (**Figure 5**). Exposure to others' achievements on platforms like LinkedIn can trigger negative social comparisons, potentially impacting self-motivation and mental health. Resilience involves protective factors that help adolescents adapt positively despite challenges, social support and a sense of mutual need obtained from interactions on Facebook can increase mental resilience in overcoming pressure and stress.

Gua di tengah malam sedang membaca LinkedIn milik orang-orang seusia gua

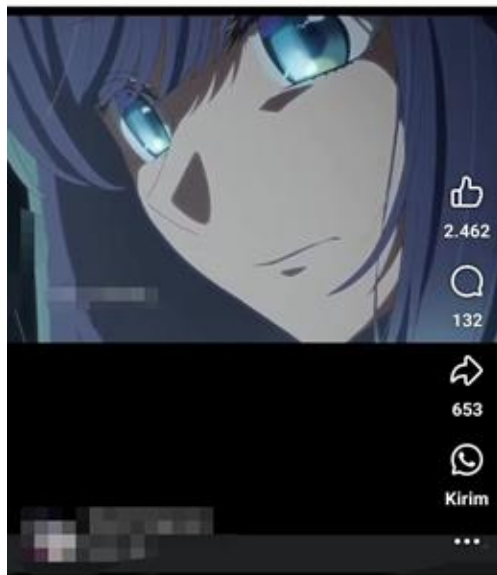


Figure 4. Facebook posts featuring social comparisons on LinkedIn and emotional reflections in Gen Z (Documented by authors).

beyond the presentation itself. This allows for a deeper and more nuanced understanding that complements existing reviews.

Conclusion

The social media use (e.g. Facebook) among Gen Z has a negative impact on mental health such as anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and sleep disorders. Understanding online behavior is crucial in assessing the impact of digital media on adolescent mental health. Interventions targeting these behaviors can help mitigate the negative effects. However, social media can be a valuable tool for supporting youth mental health by providing resources for those seeking or offering help on digital platforms. Family and mental health nurses can provide education on healthy social media use, identify early signs of mental health issues, and offer support along with resources. Nurses can also collaborate with other healthcare professionals to develop evidence-based interventions and guidelines for mitigating the negative effects of social media on mental health. It is important to note that governments and health policymakers also play a vital role in addressing the mental health impacts of social media on Gen Z. They can develop and implement policies that promote healthy social media use, regulate harmful content, and ensure digital platforms prioritize users' mental well-being. Policymakers can also allocate funds for research and initiatives focused on mitigating the negative effects of social media on mental health. Future research should focus on longitudinal

Responses such as “solution, don't be on LinkedIn anymore and focus on developing yourself” illustrate a positive form of resilience, where individuals choose not to get caught up in social comparisons and focus more on self-development. This attitude demonstrates the realization that everyone has a different path to success, as well as the importance of maintaining mental health by limiting exposure to the achievements of others that may not necessarily fit one's personal context (Kostyrka-Allchorne et al., 2023). Resilience involves protective factors that help adolescents adapt positively despite challenges. Strengthening resilience through interventions like social skills training and counseling can improve their ability to manage stress and reduce the effects of vulnerabilities (Dong et al., 2024). The role of family, school and community is important in shaping adolescents' media consumption patterns. Families act as supervisors and role models in media use, and build healthy media literacy (Pera, 2020). Communities provide a supportive environment and help teens avoid risky content (Popat & Tarrant, 2023). This combination of roles helps shape healthy and responsible media consumption patterns among adolescents (Moroney et al., 2023).

The literature review on the implications of Facebook media content posts on Gen Z's mental health status has several shortcomings, including the use of a cross-sectional design, self-reporting in a Western society, and biases inherent in self-reporting. Like the previous literature, this study primarily focuses on the negative consequences and ignores the benefits. This review also offers additional strengths. The review incorporates more recent research and adds an observational aspect by studying member interactions in a Facebook group comprised mainly of Gen Z. Direct observation provides richer data that captures user behavior and sentiment



Figure 5. Self-anxiety expressions in Gen Z when viewing peer achievements (Documented by authors).

studies to track long-term effects and potential causal relationships. Additionally, a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative methods would also be beneficial in gaining a deeper understanding of Gen Z's experiences.

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The author chose not to make use of generative text AI tools at any point during the writing of this article.

Author declaration

All authors contributed to reviewing the topic, analyzing the data, and preparing the manuscript for publication. They also approved the final version of this manuscript.

Availability of data and materials

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Authors' perspective

Innovation points

- Facebook has significantly impacted Gen Z that bringing both positive and negative effects on their mental health and emotional well-being.
- Gen Z is experiencing escalating rates of mental health disorders, with factors like social media, global concerns, and academic pressures that contributing to this crisis.
- Facebook can influence emotional health that affecting the capacity to express and manage emotions among Gen Z.

Potential areas of interest

- What specific Facebook content types have the most significant impact on Gen Z's mental health?
- How can Facebook be used positively to support Gen Z's mental health and well-being?
- What strategies can be implemented to mitigate the negative effects of Facebook on Gen Z's mental health status?

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