# The Effect Of Social Media And Identity Crisis

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"Social media can have a powerful negative effect on how we see ourselves. We compare ourselves to others and feel like we're always falling short. The more time we spend online, the more of a failure we feel."

-Dr. Marcia Sirota, MD, Ruthless Compassion Institute.

## ABSTRACT

*The goal of this research is to investigate and analyze the impact of social media on the development of the identity of its users. Today, social media is an unavoidable and vital aspect of one's life. It has the potential to influence one's psychological well-being by altering how we perceive ourselves and others. This paper discusses the concept of social media and how it provides freedom and anonymity. There are numerous social media platforms that provide virtual interactions and relationships worldwide, and the burden of likes, shares, follows, and comments creates a sense of competitiveness among its users, which causes distress and anxiety. Whereas social media was designed to connect people, it has instead contributed to feelings of loneliness and separation from reality. The study sheds light on how the concept of 'identity' has changed as a result of technology innovation and additional influences that erode a person's true identity. The ongoing demand for approval and validation puts a lot of strain on maintaining an online image or an ideal image, which may differ from an individual's actual personality. This study defines the concept of social media and the FoMO phenomena among users. It examines virtual world relationships and interactions, as well as the effects they have on a person's identity and psychological well-being.*

**KEYWORDS:** *psychology, mental health, identity crisis, social media, FoMO, virtual world interactions.*

## INTRODUCTION:

The word "social media" refers to a variety of websites and online platforms that provide services such as communication, interaction, affiliation, idea exchange, and so on. It has earned its place in people's life by allowing them to connect and communicate with friends and family. Social media platforms have made it easy to connect with others from anywhere and at any time. Globally, social media has a tremendous tractive force.

The history of social media dates back to 1844, when Samuel Morse sent the first electrical communication by telegraph. It increased dramatically in the 1980s and 1990s. Today, social media is one of the primary reasons people utilize the internet. With the introduction of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Tick-Tock, Pinterest, and Instagram, things began to change dramatically on a worldwide scale. These platforms are used not only for personal enjoyment and entertainment, but also for corporate purposes.

According to available data, India has an estimated 33.4% Active Social Media Penetration (ASMP). According to published data, there were 398.0 million users aged 18 and up

on leading social media platforms at the beginning of 2023, accounting for approximately 40.2% of India's entire population. According to the Kepios team's research, there were around 5.17 billion social media users worldwide as of early July 2024. This represents around 63.7% of the global population.

## THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a type of electronic technology which enables people to share concepts and knowledge, such as text and images, via digital communities and networks. User-generated material is common on social media, and it encourages involvement through likes, shares, comments, and discussions. Over 5 billion individuals throughout the world utilize social media. Social media is credited for fostering community, but it is also criticized for facilitating disinformation and hate speech. Social networking is becoming an increasingly significant component of many businesses' marketing operations.

Social media provides an environment where content is freely available and easily accessible. The vast amount of knowledge available online is quickly and easily exchanged and transmitted to entire communities. Communication has changed dramatically since the introduction of social media platforms. It has been modified and shaped by the various social media applications that exercise actual control. These groundbreaking social media programs have transformed communities all over the world, allowing people to interact globally and embrace different cultures both personally and socially.

Social media is a virtual world, often known as the metaverse, in which people can choose how they appear and change it whenever they please. They can establish virtual profiles based on their preferences and interests. Individuals can express their views, thoughts, and feelings without fear of being judged and labelled. They explore their newfound freedom of anonymity without being suppressed or restrained. However, this unrestrained freedom leads to disorientation and identity crises among individuals. People may feel misplaced and misunderstood, resulting in anxiety.

## VIRTUAL INTERACTIONS AND CONNECTIONS

People all over the world use social media platforms to connect and share information. On a personal level, social media allows users to interact with friends and family while also being impacted by their interests and lifestyles. Digital media has given rise to a plethora of online communities based on common interests and hobbies. These communities enable people to connect with people who share their beliefs from all over the world, creating a sense of belongingness and companionship. People can find support, advice, and camaraderie in online communities like forums, Facebook groups, and subreddits. Digital media has enabled the deepening of special ties.

People socialize virtually by commenting to social media posts, liking and disliking them, and sharing their thoughts on them. The persistent observation of other people influences individuals' behaviour and opinions, causing change in their attitudes, sometimes without being aware of it. To stay ahead in the race, they post their own photos and films for others to like and share. As a result, they gradually feel compelled to outperform others in order to receive more likes and views on their photos and videos. Furthermore, individuals reveal their personal information, locations, and so on such platforms, which can be readily abused because everyone is under surveillance in the virtual world. This excessive sharing is harmful for the psychological health of the individuals.

Critics of digital media are concerned about how it may affect interpersonal abilities. As more encounters take place in the digital domain, some claim that people have begun to lose

their ability to do so successfully in person. Nonverbal cues, such as body language and facial emotions, are essential in human communication, but they are frequently absent in digital interactions. This deterioration of face-to-face communication abilities can impede our ability to create meaningful connections with others. Furthermore, social interactions that occur mostly or completely online may not satisfy the desire for physical interaction or connection. Even if people are extremely gregarious on virtual platforms, this might lead to feelings of loneliness in the real world.

## SOCIAL MEDIA AND MENTAL HEALTH

There are both disadvantages and advantages to virtual connections. It is a blessing for people who have restricted access to interpersonal relationships and feel isolated, as it allows the like-minded people to get together and share their thoughts, opinions, and experiences.

However, relying too much on virtual interactions and relationships might lead to catastrophic consequences and challenges. Virtual connections cannot replace face-to-face conversations or physical human connections. Real-life communications are more profound, intimate, and significant, delivering a satisfying sense of emotional support and comfort. Such relationships evoke feelings of satisfaction and belonging. The inability to read other people's body language and emotions in virtual conversations frequently results in miscommunication and misunderstandings.

According to a study conducted at the University of Pennsylvania, frequent use of Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram increases rather than lowers loneliness. In contrast, the study discovered that limiting your use of social media can help you feel less lonely and isolated while also improving your general well-being. Humans require face-to-face contact to maintain mental wellness. Nothing relieves stress and improves mood like eye contact with someone you care about. The more you prioritize social media interaction above in-person connections, the greater your risk of acquiring or aggravating mood disorders like anxiety and depression.

Showcasing endless selfies and your deepest thoughts on social media can lead to an unhealthy sense of self-centeredness and isolate you from real-life friendships. When people are in a social setting and feel scared, awkward, or lonely, they resort to our phones and access social media. Of course, using social media eliminates the opportunity for face-to-face conversation, which can assist to alleviate anxiety. Excessive social media use may be hiding other underlying issues, such as stress, despair, or boredom. If one spends more time on social media when they're sad, lonely, or bored, they could be using it to distract yourself from unpleasant feelings or self-soothe. While it may be challenging at first, allowing oneself to experience feelings can lead to healthier ways of managing your emotions.

## SOCIAL MEDIA AND IDENTITY CRISIS

The word 'identity crisis' refers to a person's state of mind when he is unsure of his core viewpoint and purpose in life as an individual. It can happen to anyone and at any stage of life, but young minds, particularly teenagers who are emotionally fragile, are especially susceptible to this phenomenon. The identity crisis pushes a person to reflect on his life choices, objectives, professional development, personal connections, and relationships, and, as a result, his overall purpose in life. This phenomenon is caused by a complex interaction of relationships, societal standards, and cultures. A person's identity is shaped by his beliefs, values, attributes, emotions,

and feelings. It is dynamic and always evolving. However, with the arrival of social media, people have developed two identities: one offline and one online. The confusion and lack of clarity about one's true self has resulted in an identity crisis among the people. The true self is sometimes disguised and masked by the virtual self, causing it to disappear completely. The balance between the genuine and ideal selves offers direction and purpose in life.

In today's technologically advanced world, an individual's identity is determined by how others perceive him or her, rather than who they are. Personal ties, societal impact, and real-life interactions are no longer the primary factors creating a person's identity. People have begun to modify their behavior and identity in response to how others perceive them and how others view them based on their online profiles. Social media encourages unrealistic goals to be achieved. The constant demand for validation puts huge pressure on people to meet unrealistic standards imposed by social media. Self-worth is evaluated based on the amount of views, comments, loves, and dislikes of online profiles and pictures. This generates a tremendous amount of strain, producing worry and leading to various types of insecurities. Peer pressure and continual comparison on social media platforms create a severe competitive environment that ruins a person's true identity.

The constant desire to be updated on social media platforms is addictive. The vicious loop is a psychological phenomenon known as 'FoMO' or 'Fear Of Missing Out'. Individuals' attention seeking behaviour and the desire for ongoing affirmation generates instability in their heads, causing them to battle to match their unique identities with social standards. FoMO is a relatively recent psychiatric illness that might last for a long period or be divided into several short-term episodes. The feeling of inferiority complex and seclusion might lead to a permanent state of mind. People are bombarded with enormous information and details about other people on social networking sites, causing self-doubt about themselves and their life.

There are two progressions of FoMO. The first is the perception of missing out on social media. The second one is a compulsive behavior to maintain these social relationships. The compulsive attachment to social media causes emotional strain, aggravation, and anxiety, which leads to self-deprecation and rejection. Social media's 24/7 availability is addictive, and comparing one's life to the edited lives of others online creates a warped perception in the user's mind. Unreasonable expectations and never-ending upward societal comparisons can significantly reduce one's self-esteem. The real world, which exists outside the virtual realm, becomes distant and lost with time.

Social anxiety and sadness are induced by the impractical burden of presenting oneself as ideal and flawless. This illusory flawless self, which is nearly impossible to obtain in real life, creates tension and worry, deteriorating both mental and physical health over time. The distinction between authentic and phony self is eventually erased.

Another effect of social media is on sleep and circadian rhythms. Mobile devices and computer monitors used to access social networking websites all emit a high level of blue light. This artificial light interrupts the natural sleep cycle. Blue light in artificial light is the most harmful to people. Blue light lowers melatonin generation more than other wavelengths. Blue light suppresses melatonin via the sensors in our eyes, making it difficult to fall asleep. Browsing the internet preceding bedtime is no longer only a distraction from sleep; it can really prevent you from sleeping at all.

The link between sleep and psychological wellness is well recognized. Anxious people spend significantly less time in deep sleep than those who are not anxious. It is commonly understood that long-term sleep deprivation and worry are detrimental to a person's physical and mental health.

## CONCLUSION

Social networking has become an unavoidable part of modern life. According to studies, ordinarily a person will not be hurt by using digital technology, but this does not mean there are no scenarios in which it could. Social media has a significant impact on people's social and personal lives. Professional groups advise people to use such platforms wisely. It is a forum where people may freely express their opinions, thoughts, and passions. others have the freedom to reach out to others from all walks of life around the world and exchange views.

However, these unconstrained relationships have had a negative impact on people who appear to have lost control over their own behaviour and are heavily influenced by others who mould and drive their lifestyles. The escapism afforded by the use of social media impairs a person's psychological health when he chooses to ignore his real-life troubles in favour of the superficial consolation supplied by virtual contacts. It also raised the risk of people reporting impairments in their achievements due to poor mental health.

Real-life encounters and experiences influence our identities and personalities. Personal ties and meaningful connections enable us to curate and navigate our lives. Social media has the capacity to positively influence people. However, it is entirely up to us to decide what influences us and what we choose to ignore. It is critical to recognize that everyone has defects and that perfection is an illusion. People should stop being harsh on themselves and others and stop striving to meet the artificial standards set by social media platforms.

As we look ahead, it is apparent that social networking and mental health will remain major concerns. As technology advances and new platforms arise, we must be aware and proactive in addressing the hazards connected with these services. More research and collaboration among politicians, legal experts, social media firms, mental health specialists, and educators are required to address this developing issue and establish effective solutions to promote healthy social media use while mitigating its potential effects.

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