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## The dark side of the scroll: Role of nursing staff in understanding and mitigating the negative mental health effects of social media on patients

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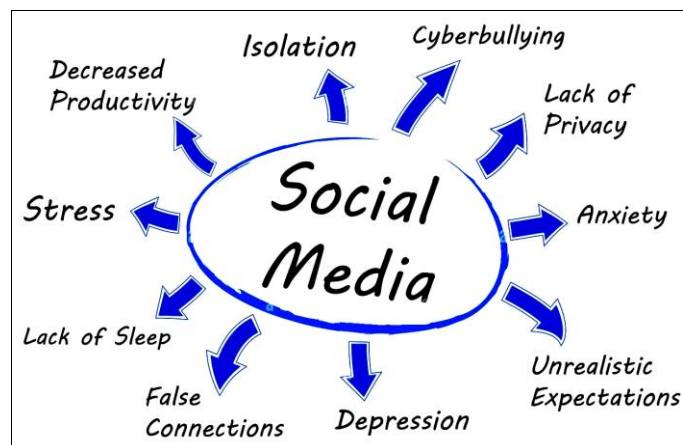
### Abstract

The pervasive use of social media has transformed the way individuals communicate and the pervasive use of social media has fundamentally transformed the ways in which individuals communicate, socialize, and access information in today's interconnected world. While these platforms offer numerous benefits such as increased connectivity and access to health information, they also present significant challenges and risks to mental health, particularly among vulnerable populations such as adolescents and young adults. This paper explores the multifaceted negative psychological impacts of social media on patients, including heightened anxiety, depression, diminished self-esteem, loneliness, and social isolation. It highlights how constant exposure to curated and idealized online content, cyberbullying, and unhealthy social comparisons contribute to these adverse outcomes. Central to this exploration is the crucial role nursing staff play in the early identification, comprehensive assessment, and effective mitigation of social media-related mental health issues. The paper underscores the importance of collaborative goal setting between nurses and patients to encourage sustainable behavioral changes regarding screen time and social media engagement. Additionally, ethical and legal considerations surrounding patient privacy, confidentiality, and professional boundaries in the context of social media are critically examined. Practical clinical case studies illustrate the application of these nursing strategies, demonstrating improvements in patient mental health outcomes through mindful, informed nursing care. Finally, recommendations are proposed to strengthen nursing practice by equipping healthcare professionals with the knowledge, skills, and tools necessary to address the "dark side of the scroll." This ultimately emphasizes the indispensable role of nurses in fostering healthier, safer, and more balanced interactions with social media for vulnerable patient populations, thereby promoting mental resilience in the digital age.

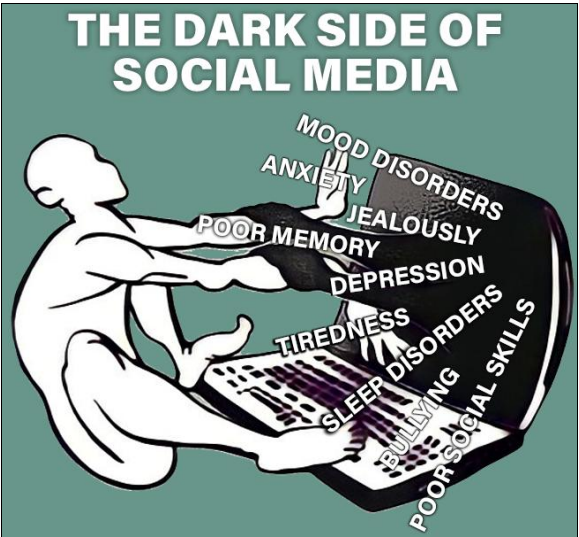
**Keywords:** Social media, mental health, nursing staff, patient care, digital well-being, nursing interventions, anxiety, depression

### Introduction

In the digital era, social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok have become deeply integrated into daily life, fundamentally reshaping how individuals communicate, socialize, and consume information. These platforms offer numerous benefits, including enhanced connectivity, the ability to maintain long-distance relationships, access to diverse support communities, and a wealth of health-related information.



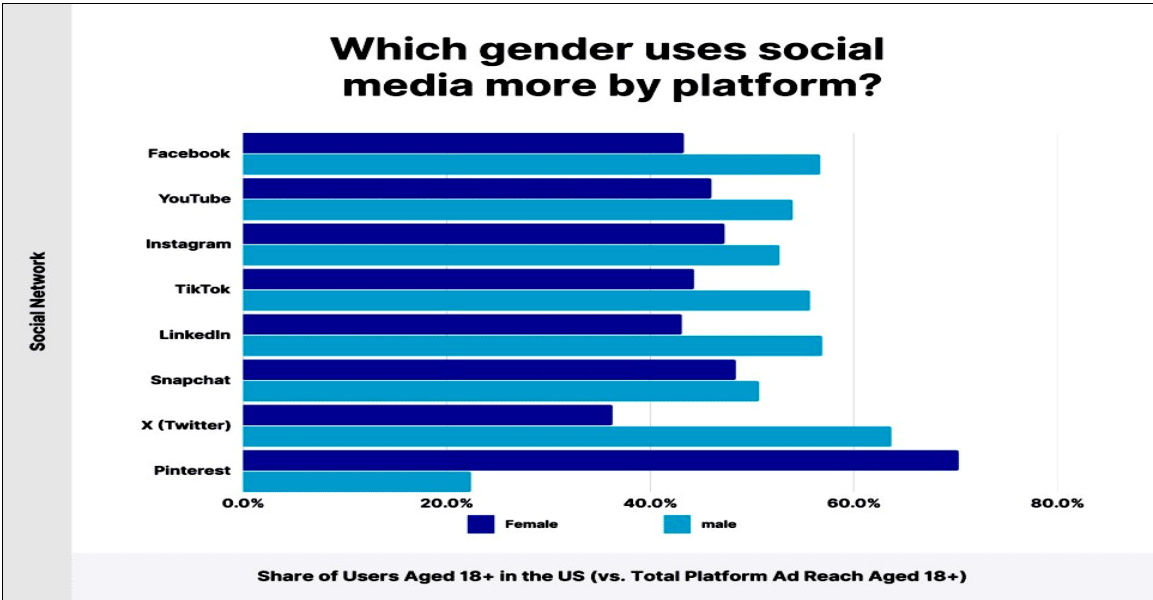
For many users, social media serves as a vital outlet for self-expression and social interaction. However, despite these positive aspects, there are growing concerns about the significant risks social media poses to mental health and overall well-being. Emerging research increasingly links excessive or problematic social media use with a range of psychological issues, including heightened levels of anxiety, depression, feelings of loneliness, social isolation, and diminished self-esteem. The constant exposure to curated content and social comparison, alongside cyberbullying and online harassment, can exacerbate these mental health challenges. Patients presenting with such difficulties are frequently encountered in healthcare settings, underscoring the urgent need for healthcare professionals, especially nursing staff, to recognize and understand the psychological impacts related to social media use. Nurses, as frontline healthcare providers, play a pivotal role in delivering holistic patient care that encompasses physical, emotional, and social dimensions of health. Their unique position enables them to perform comprehensive assessments of patients' mental health status, including identifying signs that may be associated with problematic social media engagement. Furthermore, nurses are equipped to implement tailored, evidence-based interventions and offer counseling aimed at promoting healthier digital habits.



Through education and advocacy, they can empower patients to develop balanced social media use, fostering resilience and improved well-being. This paper aims to explore the negative mental health effects associated with social media use, analyze global trends in usage, and critically examine the nursing role in mitigating these effects through assessment, intervention, and ethical practice. By highlighting effective nursing strategies and interventions, this study emphasizes the vital importance of integrating digital well-being into standard patient care protocols, ensuring a more comprehensive approach to mental health in the modern age.

### Global Trends in Social Media Use

Social media usage has experienced rapid and widespread growth worldwide, with over 4.7 billion users recorded in 2023. This surge spans all age groups, including adolescents, adults, and older adults, making social media an integral part of daily life across cultures and demographics. The widespread availability of mobile devices, along with continuous innovations in platform features, has significantly boosted user engagement, often resulting in extended periods spent online. Social media platforms serve as vital tools for sharing information, fostering connections, and building communities. They enable users to stay informed, express themselves, and interact with others globally. However, this increased usage also presents challenges. Research indicates that heavy and prolonged social media use can contribute to negative psychological outcomes such as anxiety, depression, and decreased well-being (Keles, McCrae, & Grealish, 2020) <sup>[9]</sup>. The immersive nature of social media, along with pressures related to online interactions and social comparison, may exacerbate mental health vulnerabilities in some individuals. Moreover, the evolving nature of social media encourages continuous engagement through algorithms designed to capture attention, which can inadvertently lead to excessive screen time. These patterns highlight the need for balanced and mindful social media use to maximize benefits while minimizing potential harm. Understanding these trends is essential for individuals, healthcare professionals, and policymakers to address the complex impact of social media on mental health and society.



### Mental Health Consequences

A growing body of interdisciplinary research underscores the increasingly complex and multifaceted relationship between social media use and mental health. Over the past decade, numerous systematic reviews and empirical studies have consistently identified a strong correlation between excessive or problematic social media engagement and heightened levels of anxiety, depression, stress, and other psychological difficulties (Huang, 2017; Berryman, Ferguson, & Negy, 2018) <sup>[8, 2]</sup>. Several mechanisms explain these associations. One of the most influential is social comparison, where users evaluate their self-worth based on the curated and idealized portrayals of others online. This process often results in diminished self-esteem, body dissatisfaction, and unrealistic life expectations, particularly among adolescents and young adults. Another significant factor is cyberbullying, a pervasive issue that can lead to emotional trauma, isolation, and, in severe cases, self-harm or suicidal ideation. The fear of missing out (FOMO) further compounds these problems by fostering compulsive checking behaviors and feelings of inadequacy when individuals perceive others as leading more fulfilling lives (Przybylski *et al.*, 2013) <sup>[15]</sup>. Moreover, the disruption of sleep patterns due to prolonged screen exposure, especially before bedtime, has been linked to cognitive fatigue, mood disturbances, and decreased academic or occupational performance. Adolescents and young adults represent the most vulnerable demographic group, as their developing identities and social relationships are heavily shaped by digital interactions (Best, Manktelow, & Taylor, 2014) <sup>[3]</sup>.



Negative online experiences, including exclusion, judgment, or lack of positive feedback, can amplify feelings of loneliness and social alienation. However, it is equally important to recognize that social media is not inherently detrimental. When used mindfully and purposefully, it can serve as a powerful tool for mental health promotion and psychoeducation. Online platforms can connect individuals with peer support communities, mental health professionals,

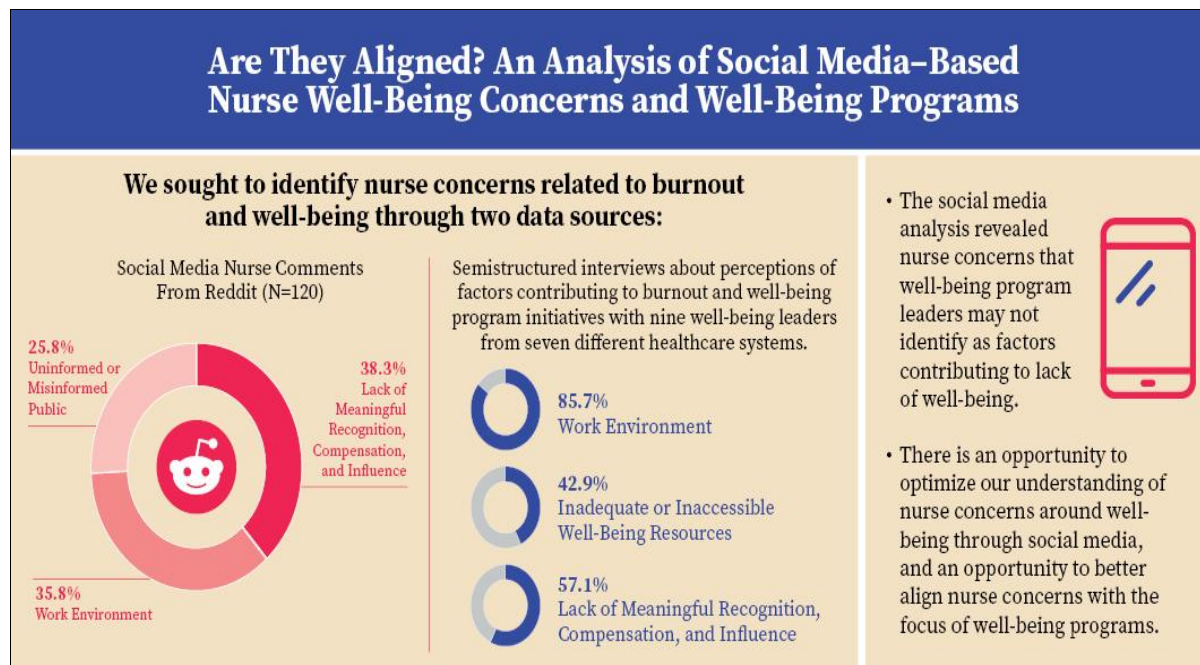
and educational resources that foster resilience and coping. Campaigns promoting self-compassion, awareness, and digital literacy have demonstrated potential in counteracting harmful effects. Therefore, the challenge lies in achieving a healthy balance—encouraging conscious engagement while mitigating risks. Clinicians, educators, and policymakers must work collaboratively to promote digital well-being, empowering users to navigate the online environment safely and positively. By fostering awareness of both risks and benefits, society can transform social media from a source of psychological strain into an instrument for connection, growth, and emotional support in the modern digital landscape.

### Role of Nursing Staff in Addressing the Mental Health Impact of Social Media

In recent years, social media has become a dominant force in shaping how individuals communicate, learn, and perceive the world around them. While it offers numerous benefits, including social connection and information access, its negative impact on mental health is increasingly recognized. Despite this, the nursing profession is only beginning to systematically address social media's role in mental health within clinical practice. Nurses, who are often the first point of contact for patients, are uniquely positioned to bridge this gap by integrating social media-related assessments into routine mental health evaluations. Nurses can play a vital role in educating patients about healthy digital habits. By promoting media literacy, they can help patients critically analyze the content they consume, recognize unrealistic portrayals often seen on social media, and reduce feelings of inadequacy or anxiety linked to online comparisons. Furthermore, nurses can guide patients in developing emotional regulation and coping strategies to manage the stress and potential addiction associated with excessive social media use. These nursing interventions have been shown to buffer negative psychological effects and contribute to better overall patient outcomes (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011) <sup>[14]</sup>. However, the full potential of nurses in this area remains underutilized due to gaps in training and the absence of standardized guidelines addressing digital health challenges. Many nurses lack formal education on how to effectively assess and intervene in issues related to social media use and mental health. This gap limits their ability to respond confidently and comprehensively to patients struggling with problems like cyberbullying, social media addiction, or anxiety fueled by online interactions.

Increasing investment in nursing education and training focused on digital health literacy and social media's psychological effects would significantly limit the negative consequences patients experience. With enhanced skills and clear protocols, nurses could more effectively identify at-risk individuals, provide timely counseling, and collaborate with multidisciplinary teams to deliver holistic mental health care. Additionally, raising awareness among nursing staff about the importance of monitoring social media's influence can foster a proactive approach in clinical settings.





### Nursing Assessment Framework

A comprehensive nursing assessment framework for addressing the mental health effects of social media use involves a multidimensional approach integrating psychological, behavioral, and social factors. Nurses should begin by incorporating targeted questions into patient interviews to evaluate social media habits, duration of use, emotional responses, and potential negative experiences such as cyberbullying or social isolation. Tools like the Social Media Use Integration Scale (SMUIS) and Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) can assist in screening for problematic usage and depressive symptoms. Assessment should also include observing behavioral cues such as withdrawal, mood changes, sleep disturbances, and communication patterns that may indicate digital distress. It is essential to contextualize findings within the patient's overall mental health history, social support system, and resilience levels. Collaborative care plans can then be tailored based on this holistic evaluation, allowing nurses to monitor and address evolving needs related to social media exposure.

### Nursing Interventions and Health Promotion Strategies

Nursing interventions designed to mitigate the adverse effects of social media on mental health are multifaceted and holistic, encompassing education, counseling, advocacy, and empowerment. Nurses serve as frontline caregivers and educators who can identify early signs of social media-related distress, such as anxiety, depression, or low self-esteem, through comprehensive assessment and open communication. Educational interventions focus on increasing patients' awareness of the psychological risks associated with excessive screen time, online comparison, and cyberbullying. By teaching strategies for healthy digital engagement—such as setting time limits, curating positive online environments, and practicing mindful media consumption—nurses empower individuals to regain control over their digital habits. Counseling interventions, including therapeutic communication and referral to mental health professionals when necessary, help patients process emotions linked to negative online experiences. Advocacy

plays a key role as well; nurses can promote institutional policies that support digital well-being programs and safe online practices within healthcare and educational settings. Additionally, empowerment-based approaches encourage patients to develop self-efficacy, resilience, and balanced coping mechanisms to handle digital pressures. Group workshops, peer support sessions, and community outreach programs led by nurses can further reinforce these positive behaviors. Collectively, these interventions contribute to promoting digital wellness, reducing social media-related stress, and fostering a culture of mindful and responsible technology use, thereby enhancing overall mental and emotional health.

### Digital Literacy Education

One of the foundational and most effective strategies for promoting digital wellness involves comprehensive education on digital literacy and healthy social media habits. Nurses play a pivotal role in equipping patients with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate online platforms safely and responsibly. This includes teaching individuals how to effectively use privacy and security settings to protect their personal data, manage their digital footprint, and limit exposure to harmful, triggering, or misleading content. Through structured education sessions, nurses help patients develop critical thinking and media literacy skills that enable them to evaluate the credibility and reliability of online information. Patients learn to identify misinformation, sensationalized content, and manipulative algorithms that can distort perceptions of reality or negatively affect mental health. Moreover, digital literacy education empowers individuals to recognize and respond appropriately to cyberbullying, online harassment, and peer pressure prevalent in digital spaces. By promoting self-regulation and balanced screen time, nurses guide patients toward mindful engagement—encouraging intentional use of social media for positive purposes such as learning, connecting with supportive communities, or accessing mental health resources. This proactive approach not only reduces the risks of anxiety, depression, and social comparison but also fosters confidence and autonomy in

managing one's digital environment. Ultimately, digital literacy education strengthens patients' ability to make informed, conscious choices about their online behavior, contributing to improved psychological well-being and safer participation in the digital world.

### **Emotional Regulation Support**

Nurses play a crucial role in helping patients develop emotional regulation skills to manage anxiety, depression, and stress associated with social media use. Through individualized and group sessions, nurses introduce evidence-based techniques such as mindfulness, deep breathing, meditation, and grounding exercises to help patients remain present and reduce negative emotional spirals triggered by online interactions. These strategies enhance self-awareness and emotional control, allowing individuals to pause and reflect before reacting impulsively to distressing digital content. Additionally, nurses may employ cognitive-behavioral techniques (CBT) to assist patients in identifying, challenging, and reframing distorted thoughts arising from social comparison, online criticism, or cyberbullying. By integrating relaxation practices and positive coping mechanisms into daily routines, patients can develop healthier emotional responses to online stressors. This holistic support strengthens resilience, promotes self-compassion, and reduces the psychological burden caused by excessive or toxic social media engagement.

### **Encouraging Offline Activities**

To promote a balanced and fulfilling lifestyle, nurses actively encourage patients to participate in offline activities that foster real-world engagement and emotional well-being. Activities such as regular physical exercise, creative hobbies, journaling, volunteering, and face-to-face social interactions are strongly recommended as alternatives to prolonged screen time. These offline experiences not only reduce dependency on social media for validation or entertainment but also enhance mood, self-esteem, and social connection. Nurses may collaborate with community centers, recreational clubs, or college organizations to help patients access group activities and wellness programs tailored to their interests. Encouraging outdoor activities, such as walking, sports, or yoga, also contributes to improved mental clarity and stress reduction. By promoting these real-world experiences, nurses help patients rediscover meaningful relationships and purpose beyond the digital realm. Such engagement fosters healthier life balance, emotional stability, and overall psychological resilience against the negative effects of excessive social media use.

### **Developing Social Support Networks**

Developing strong social support networks is a key nursing strategy for mitigating the emotional and psychological impact of social media-related stress. Nurses play a central role in connecting patients with supportive resources, including peer groups, counseling services, and mental health helplines. Encouraging participation in both online and offline support systems allows individuals to share their experiences, gain emotional reassurance, and learn coping strategies from others facing similar challenges. Nurses may also facilitate the formation of community-based or campus-led mental health groups to foster inclusion and belonging. By helping patients build trusting relationships with friends, family, and mentors, nurses strengthen protective factors

that reduce loneliness and isolation often worsened by negative online interactions. These support networks serve as safe spaces for open dialogue, emotional expression, and mutual encouragement. Ultimately, a well-developed social support system enhances resilience, promotes recovery, and empowers patients to maintain healthier digital and emotional habits.

### **Collaborative Goal Setting**

Collaborative goal setting is a fundamental aspect of nursing interventions aimed at addressing the mental health effects of excessive social media use. This approach emphasizes a patient-centered model, where nurses and patients work together to identify specific, realistic, and achievable objectives that support behavioral change. In the context of digital overuse, nurses guide patients to assess their current screen time patterns, emotional triggers, and the impact of social media on their mood and self-esteem. Together, they can establish step-by-step goals such as reducing daily screen time, setting device-free periods during meals or before bedtime, and engaging in alternative offline activities that promote relaxation and social connection. This collaborative approach not only empowers patients to take ownership of their digital habits but also fosters accountability and self-awareness. Nurses play a vital role in offering consistent encouragement, progress tracking, and emotional support throughout the process. By incorporating motivational interviewing and reflective discussions, nurses can help patients explore their values, motivations, and barriers to change. Regular follow-ups enable adjustments to the goals based on the patient's progress and feedback, ensuring that interventions remain flexible and personalized. Ultimately, collaborative goal setting enhances the patient's sense of control and self-efficacy, leading to sustainable behavioral modification and improved mental well-being.

### **Health Promotion Campaigns**

Health promotion campaigns within healthcare settings play a crucial role in spreading awareness about digital wellness and the psychological consequences of excessive social media use. These campaigns serve as educational platforms that reach both patients and healthcare professionals, highlighting the importance of responsible digital engagement as an integral part of overall health. Through posters, workshops, seminars, and social media outreach, nurses can promote key messages about balancing online and offline life, recognizing signs of digital fatigue, and practicing mindful media consumption. Campaigns may include interactive sessions where participants learn about setting privacy boundaries, managing cyberbullying, and fostering positive online communication. Additionally, nurses can collaborate with mental health professionals to design initiatives that encourage open dialogue about stress, anxiety, and self-esteem issues linked to digital exposure. Integrating digital wellness education into existing health programs strengthens preventive care efforts, especially among young adults and adolescents who are most vulnerable to online pressures. By promoting these initiatives, healthcare institutions demonstrate a proactive stance in supporting psychological resilience and community well-being. Such campaigns not only improve individual awareness but also create a culture of collective responsibility toward healthier digital behaviors, empowering individuals to make informed choices in today's technology-driven world.

### **Ethical and Legal Considerations**

Nurses face a complex array of ethical and legal challenges when addressing the mental health impacts of social media on patients. One of the foremost ethical principles in nursing is confidentiality, which requires that any information related to a patient's social media use must be handled with utmost discretion. When nurses assess or discuss a patient's online behavior, they must ensure that they respect the patient's privacy rights and obtain informed consent before accessing or using information from social media platforms. For example, if a nurse notices signs of distress or harmful behavior on a patient's social media account, they should first discuss this concern with the patient and seek permission to explore the issue further, rather than accessing or sharing this information without consent. Furthermore, nurses should approach discussions about social media use without judgment or bias, maintaining a supportive and non-stigmatizing attitude. Patients must be treated with respect and dignity, and their autonomy should be honored by allowing them to make informed decisions about their social media habits. For instance, if a patient is struggling with social media-induced anxiety or cyberbullying, the nurse's role is to provide guidance and resources rather than imposing strict restrictions or making moral judgments about their online activities. Healthcare professionals themselves must also exercise caution in their use of social media. Nurses should adhere to professional standards and organizational policies when engaging online to prevent the blurring of personal and professional boundaries. Posting patient information, even inadvertently, or engaging in online behavior that could be perceived as unprofessional may result in disciplinary actions. An example includes a nurse posting identifiable patient details on social media or expressing opinions that may compromise patient trust or the reputation of the healthcare institution.

Legally, nurses must be aware of various frameworks related to cyberbullying, digital harassment, and the spread of misinformation. These laws vary significantly across countries and jurisdictions, meaning that nurses practicing in different regions must familiarize themselves with relevant legislation. For example, in some countries, healthcare providers are mandated reporters who must notify authorities if they suspect a patient is being cyberbullied or exposed to online abuse that threatens their safety. Additionally, nurses should understand the legal rights of patients to privacy and protection from online harms, ensuring that any interventions or reporting comply with these rights. Advocacy plays a crucial ethical role, as nurses are uniquely positioned to champion the development and implementation of policies that protect vulnerable populations, such as adolescents or individuals with mental health conditions, from social media-related harms. This could involve collaborating with healthcare organizations, policymakers, and community groups to create safer online environments or to promote digital literacy programs that help patients critically evaluate social media content.

### **Case Study**

A 19-year-old female college student presented to the nursing clinic exhibiting symptoms of anxiety, disrupted sleep patterns, and persistent low mood. During her comprehensive nursing assessment, it was revealed that she spends more than five hours each day engaging with social media platforms, particularly Instagram and TikTok. Her

online activities primarily involve browsing, posting, and interacting with content that often promotes idealized beauty standards and lifestyles. Over time, she has developed a tendency to compare her physical appearance, social life, and personal achievements with those of influencers and peers she follows online. This constant exposure to curated and filtered content has significantly contributed to her feelings of inadequacy, diminished self-worth, and heightened social anxiety. She describes experiencing a growing sense of pressure to maintain a certain image both online and in real life, which has led to emotional exhaustion and reduced self-confidence. Furthermore, the patient discloses that she has been a target of cyberbullying through direct messages and public comments posted by some classmates. These messages often contain hurtful remarks about her appearance and lifestyle, further aggravating her emotional distress. The ongoing cyberbullying has led her to withdraw from social interactions, fearing further judgment and ridicule, both in digital and physical spaces. As a result, her sense of belonging and social connectedness has deteriorated. She now avoids participating in extracurricular activities and rarely engages with friends, preferring isolation as a coping mechanism to escape online and offline criticism. Academically, she reports difficulty maintaining focus during lectures and while studying, citing intrusive thoughts about her online image and what others might be posting about her. Her grades have started to decline, adding to her stress and feelings of failure. The student also admits to experiencing frequent sleep disturbances, including difficulty falling asleep due to prolonged nighttime scrolling and exposure to emotionally triggering content. The blue light emitted from her phone, combined with late-night digital engagement, has disrupted her circadian rhythm, resulting in daytime fatigue and irritability. The cumulative impact of these factors has created a vicious cycle, where her emotional vulnerability drives her to seek comfort and distraction on social media, further worsening her mental state. During the assessment, she expresses feelings of loneliness despite her online presence and acknowledges that her digital interactions feel superficial and unfulfilling. The nurse identifies that her symptoms align with social media-induced anxiety and depressive tendencies, influenced by body image concerns, online harassment, and sleep deprivation. A holistic nursing approach is recommended, focusing on mental health counseling, digital well-being education, stress management techniques, and establishing healthy social media boundaries. Encouraging her to engage in offline social connections, physical activities, and mindfulness practices can aid in rebuilding self-esteem and improving emotional resilience. Early intervention and continuous psychosocial support are essential to prevent further decline in her mental health and to empower her in developing a balanced relationship with technology and self-image.

### **Additional Examples of Similar Cases**

1. A 22-year-old male university student reports increased irritability and episodes of panic attacks after excessive use of online gaming platforms and social media. He spends approximately six hours a day engaging with competitive games and interacting in online forums, which has led to disrupted sleep patterns and withdrawal from family and friends.



- 2. A 17-year-old adolescent female presents with symptoms of depression, including loss of appetite, fatigue, and feelings of hopelessness. She admits to compulsive checking of social media feeds, particularly on Snapchat and Facebook, driven by fear of missing out (FOMO). She also reports receiving negative comments about her appearance, which has contributed to her declining self-image.
- 3. A 20-year-old college student presents with somatic complaints such as headaches and gastrointestinal upset linked to stress from social media use. She reports engaging in late-night scrolling, which interrupts her circadian rhythm and leads to daytime fatigue and poor academic performance.

**Nursing Intervention**

The nurse undertakes a comprehensive biopsychosocial assessment, incorporating standardized tools such as the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) to evaluate depression severity, and a tailored social media use questionnaire to assess patterns, triggers, and impacts of digital engagement. The nurse provides psychoeducation about the effects of excessive social media consumption on mental health, highlighting the importance of balanced screen time, critical evaluation of online content, and awareness of cyberbullying. To address anxiety symptoms, the nurse introduces mindfulness-based stress reduction techniques, including guided breathing exercises, progressive muscle relaxation, and grounding strategies. These exercises are designed to help the patient manage anxiety in real-time and foster resilience against negative online experiences. The patient is encouraged to implement gradual reduction of screen time by setting daily limits and using apps that monitor usage. Alternative coping strategies such as journaling, engaging in physical activities, and joining campus social clubs are promoted to enhance social connectedness and improve mood. The nurse also discusses safe digital practices and strategies to manage and report cyberbullying incidents effectively. A referral is made to a mental health counselor specializing in adolescent and young adult digital wellness for further psychological support. Follow-up appointments are scheduled to monitor progress, reinforce healthy habits, and modify interventions as needed.

**Outcome**

After three months of consistent nursing intervention and follow-up, the patient demonstrates notable improvement in her overall mental health and daily functioning. She reports a significant reduction in anxiety levels and depressive symptoms, along with enhanced mood stability and self-esteem. Through collaborative goal setting and digital literacy education, she successfully decreases her daily social media use and adopts healthier online behaviors. The patient now limits screen time before bedtime, resulting in improved sleep quality and daytime alertness. Participation in offline social and extracurricular activities has increased, helping her rebuild real-world connections and confidence. Mindfulness and emotional regulation techniques have enabled her to manage stress more effectively and respond calmly to online negativity or cyberbullying. The combination of education, counseling, and empowerment-based nursing strategies has proven effective in promoting her digital well-being, reinforcing resilience, and

establishing sustainable habits that support long-term psychological and emotional health.

**Discussion**

The intersection of social media use and mental health presents complex challenges requiring an integrated nursing response. This paper illustrates that while social media can enhance connectivity, its darker aspects contribute to psychological distress among vulnerable patients. Nurses, by virtue of their holistic approach and frequent patient contact, are ideally suited to bridge this gap through targeted assessments and interventions. The nursing assessment framework serves as a vital tool for early identification of at-risk individuals, while health promotion strategies empower patients to develop resilience in digital environments. Ethical and legal considerations underscore the importance of respecting patient autonomy and privacy while advocating for safer online spaces. Despite growing awareness, significant gaps remain in nurse training and institutional policies, calling for further research and the development of standardized guidelines. Implementing comprehensive nursing education on digital well-being and integrating social media assessment into routine practice can significantly improve patient outcomes in the digital age.

**Table 1:** Common Negative Mental Health Effects Associated with Social Media Use

Mental Health Issue	Description	Nursing Assessment Indicators
Anxiety	Excessive worry, restlessness	Patient reports, behavioral observations
Depression	Persistent sadness, low mood	PHQ-9 scores, patient self-report
Low Self-esteem	Negative self-perception	Social comparison patterns, emotional cues
Sleep Disturbance	Insomnia or poor sleep quality	Sleep history, reported screen time
Cyberbullying	Online harassment or abuse	Patient disclosure, mood changes

**Table 2:** Nursing Interventions for Mitigating Social Media Mental Health Risks

Intervention	Description	Expected Outcome
Digital Literacy Education	Teaching healthy social media habits	Increased awareness and safer use
Emotional Regulation Training	Mindfulness and coping strategies	Reduced anxiety and improved mood
Encouraging Offline Activity	Promoting physical and social engagement	Balanced lifestyle, reduced screen time
Social Support Facilitation	Connecting to support groups	Enhanced social connectedness

**Conclusion**

In today’s digital age, social media has become deeply intertwined with mental health, presenting both challenges and opportunities for nursing professionals. Nurses must carefully navigate ethical responsibilities such as maintaining patient confidentiality and obtaining informed consent when addressing social media’s impact on mental well-being. It is essential that nurses approach patients’ online behaviors with sensitivity and without judgment, respecting their autonomy while providing guidance and support. At the same time, healthcare professionals themselves are held to high standards regarding their own

social media use, needing to maintain clear professional boundaries to protect patient trust and uphold the integrity of the nursing profession. Awareness of the varied legal frameworks related to cyberbullying, misinformation, and digital harassment is critical, as nurses may have reporting obligations to protect vulnerable patients and ensure compliance with applicable laws. Beyond individual care, nurses also carry an important advocacy role in promoting policies and education aimed at safeguarding patients from the potential harms of social media. By fostering digital literacy and supporting systemic efforts to reduce online abuse and misinformation, nurses contribute to building safer, more supportive environments for mental health. As social media continues to evolve, ongoing education and ethical vigilance are vital for nurses to respond effectively to these complex issues. Ultimately, by integrating ethical principles, legal knowledge, and compassionate care, nursing professionals can empower patients to navigate social media responsibly, helping to mitigate its negative effects while promoting mental well-being in an increasingly connected world.

### Conflict of Interest

Not available

### Financial Support

Not available

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