

# INPLASY

## The Impact of Social Media on Children's Mental Health: A Systematic Scoping Review

INPLASY2024100104

doi: 10.37766/inplasy2024.10.0104

Received: 24 October 2024

Published: 24 October 2024

Liu, T; Cheng, YY; Luo, YM; Wang, Z; Pang, PCI; Xia, YZ; Lau, Y.

### Corresponding author:

Patrick Cheong-lao Pang

mail@patrickpang.net

### Author Affiliation:

Macao Polytechnic University.

### ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

**Support** - Macao Polytechnic University.

**Review Stage at time of this submission** - Completed but not published.

**Conflicts of interest** - None declared.

**INPLASY registration number:** INPLASY2024100104

**Amendments** - This protocol was registered with the International Platform of Registered Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols (INPLASY) on 24 October 2024 and was last updated on 24 October 2024.

### INTRODUCTION

**Review question / Objective** This study intends to fill the gaps identified in existing reviews concerning the impact of social media on children's mental health and to provide an authoritative and comprehensive analysis of how social media affects the mental health of children aged 6 to 13 years. By conducting a systematic review, the research aims to assist policymakers, educators, and parents in better identifying and addressing these impacts, ultimately improving strategies for managing children's mental health.

**Condition being studied** Protecting children's mental health (CMH) is one of the most pressing challenges in the current digital age. Social media (SM) has rapidly evolved from a simple social networking platform to a multifunctional tool utilized across various domains, with over 5 billion global users as of 2023, representing more than 63% of the world's population. Despite the

numerous conveniences associated with this growth, CMH faces significant challenges in an increasingly digitalized environment. Research indicates that the prevalence of mental disorders among children continues to rise. These issues are often not diagnosed or treated promptly. The personalized, interactive experiences and the constant accessibility offered by SM are particularly appealing to children whose self-concept is still developing. The immersive design of these platforms enhances their attractiveness, making them more engaging and potentially addictive for young users. Frequent use of SM has been strongly linked to the development of psychiatric disorders in children. This association can be attributed to their still-maturing self-regulatory abilities, which may lead to increased anxiety and agitation.

### METHODS

**Search strategy** Web of Science ("social media" OR "new media" OR "online platform" ) AND

("children" OR "minors" OR "child") AND ("mental health" OR "well-being") AND (2014-2024)  
 ScienceDirect TS= ("social media" OR "new media" OR "online platform") AND TS=("children" OR "minors" OR "child") AND TS= ("mental health" OR "well-being") AND PY=(2014 TO 2024)

Scopus

TITLE-ABS-KEY("social media" OR "new media" OR "online platform") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY("children" OR "minors" OR "child") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY("mental health" OR "well-being") AND PUBYEAR > 2013 AND PUBYEAR < 2025

PubMed

("social media" OR "new media" OR "online platform") AND ("children" OR "minors" OR "child") AND ("mental health" OR "well-being") AND (2014 - 2024)

PsycINFO

(("social media" or "new media" or "online platform") and ("children" or "minors" or "child") and ("mental health" or "well-being")).mp. [mp= title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures, mesh word] limit 2 to yr= "2014 - 2024".

**Participant or population** Children aged 6-13 years.

**Intervention** Not applicable.

**Comparator** Not applicable.

**Study designs to be included** Cross-sectional Research, Clinical Reports, Longitudinal Studies, Exploratory Research, Empirical Studies, Technical Reports.

**Eligibility criteria** Inclusion Criteria: Children aged 6-13 years, Healthy children, Focus on the impact of SM on mental health, Research type articles, Published between 2014 and 2024, Full text in English.

Exclusion Criteria: Crossing the age limit >6 and <13, Children with medical conditions, Topics unrelated to SM and mental health, Literature review, book chapters, theses, etc., Published outside the 2014-2024 range, Full text in other languages.

**Information sources** Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Scopus, PubMed, and PsycINFO.

**Main outcome(s)** The review identified a complex relationship between social media (SM) use and children's mental health (CMH). Different SM platforms exhibited varying effects on children. Frequent SM use was strongly associated with lower self-esteem, depressive symptoms, anxiety,

and other mental health challenges in children. Conversely, moderate use of SM facilitated social interactions and emotional expression, which may have a positive influence on mental health. Additionally, factors such as social support from family and school were found to play a critical role in mitigating the negative effects of SM on CMH.

**Quality assessment / Risk of bias analysis** All retrieved records were exported to EndNote software, and duplicate entries were removed. Two independent reviewers (TL and YC) conducted an initial screening of article titles and abstracts according to predefined inclusion criteria. Any discrepancies between the two reviewers were resolved through negotiation with a third reviewer (PP).

**Strategy of data synthesis** Data were collected, summarized, and analyzed using descriptive statistics to characterize the sample articles. The descriptive findings were presented through graphs and charts. The results were interpreted through a narrative synthesis that addresses the research questions posed in the review, and this interpretation was validated by all authors.

**Subgroup analysis** Geographical and sample characteristics; Year of publications; Types of studies; Research topics; Social media and mental health association indicators; Social media platforms; Factors and influences.

**Sensitivity analysis** Not applicable.

**Language restriction** Yes. Full text in English.

**Country(ies) involved** Macao Special Administrative Region, China.

**Keywords** Social media, Children, Mental health, Systematic scoping review.

**Contributions of each author**

Author 1 - Ting Liu - Author 1 proposed and designed this study.

Email: p2314982@gmx.edu.mo

Author 2 - Yanying Cheng - Author 2 proposed and designed this study.

Email: chengyanring@hotmail.com

Author 3 - Yiming Luo - Author 3 helped with data analyses and resolved disagreements in the review process.

Email: p2417889@mpu.edu.mo

Author 4 - Zhuo Wang - Author 4 helped with data analyses and resolved disagreements in the review process.

Email: wangzhuo0704@cuhk.edu.hk

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Author 5 - Patrick Cheong-lao Pang - Author 5 supervised and provided resources for this work.

Email: [mail@patrickpang.net](mailto:mail@patrickpang.net)

Author 6 - Yuanze Xia - Author 6 helped with data analyses and resolved disagreements in the review process.

Email: [p2418258@gmx.edu.mo](mailto:p2418258@gmx.edu.mo)

Author 7 - Ying Lau - Author 7 supervised and provided resources for this work.

Email: [yinglau@cuhk.edu.hk](mailto:yinglau@cuhk.edu.hk)