

Competence in Managing the Balance between Social Media and Mental Health

Anastasia Ranissa, Mahasiswa STARKI & Cresensiana Widi Astuti, Dosen STARKI



What are you doing during self-quarantine amidst the COVID-19 pandemic? Every one of us is forced to stay at home and live our lives at home, indoors. And then, BOOM. The number of social media users surge. No wonder. Maybe it's not accurate now, but in 2019, 'there are 3.5 billion social media users – which equates to about 45% of the population'

(Tjepkema, 2019). The numbers prove that social media becomes our primary need. The users now must have increased higher due to this pandemic. This article is aimed at highlighting the impact of the use of social media on mental health and at offering insights on how to develop a competence in managing the balance between social media use and mental health.

Some facts about the use of social media

Social media has been used as a means of communications, not only among young people, but also among adults and senior citizens. Gohel (2018) identified Facebook as the social medium preferred by brands to advertise on, followed by YouTube, Twitter, and LinkedIn. 8% of brands preferred other platforms such as Pinterest, Instagram, and Google.

In 2019, Lua (2019) noted that Facebook gained the top position with 2.23 billion MAUs (Monthly Active Users), tailed by YouTube with 1.9 billion MAUs, WhatsApp with 1.5 billion MAUs, and Messenger with 1.3 billion MAUs.

In 2020, Kellogg (2020) identified that Facebook is still the biggest social medium, followed by Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Snapchat, Pinterest, and Reddit. Kellogg (2020) wrote

"Some of the leading industries on Facebook include financial services, ecommerce, retail,

gaming, entertainment, media, telecom, technology, consumer goods, and automotive businesses.”

Who are the users of social media? Mohsin (2020) identified that Millennials are placed in number 1 of the highest percentage active social media users with 90.4%, followed by Gen X with 77.5% and last is Baby Boomers with 48.2%.

Millennials were born with gadgets in their hands and they have lived through their life with gadgets – in almost all aspects of their life. No wonder, they become the softest target of advertisement, promotion, with the help of the new-founded jobs: influencers, telegram endorsing any kind of products, lifestyle, anything...

Gen X are people in transition. They witnessed the birth of gadgets as an impact of technology advancement. They are careful, yet willing to learn to keep abreast of the development and advancement. They usually use social media just to stay up-to-date, unlike Millennials who live in social media. KooH (2019) wrote that

“While this generation is digitally curious—our estimates show that 77.5% of Xers are social network users—their usage tends to be narrower and less experimental than younger generations.”

Baby Boomers are generation who were born after World War II. They are now senior citizens having more time to screen. Jafrey (2018) wrote that the number of baby boomers joining the social media world is growing by the day, and now, more than ever is the best time to make them the target market. To entice them more, Jafrey (2018) further recommended marketer

“... to include a link to your website or product purchase page on your social media posts. Baby boomers are also more likely to follow a link and forward content to their network, so make sure your social media posts are backed up by more information on your website.”

This shows that majority of this world’s population are using social media for their daily activities. Social media has helped people in many kinds of ways: work, leisure, networking, entertainment, promotion, et cetera. For example, Prudential Indonesia promotes their insurance products on their social media accounts. Not only that, the leading insurance company shares their company activities to build engagement with the users.

Younger generation usually prefer the most used social media, Instagram. It also has a “Professional Account” which is best for content creator, influencer, retailers, organizations etc. This feature allows the user to see growth tools (see insights and reach more people with promotions), simplified messaging which makes it easier for them to manage message requests, and connect with fans or followers. A handy feature...

Balancing the Use of Social Media and Maintaining Mental Health

Seeing the very close relationship between users and social media, it is important to maintain a healthy relationship, if not, it may lead to instability of our mental health. Mental health, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), is a state of well-being which individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and can contribute to his or her community.

Being able to have a balance life in almost everything is everyone's dream. It is not an easy task to get away from social media. It is true that social media are addictive, but as a lot of people depend on it too much, the platforms' positive benefits can turn into negativity. The ability to have self-control is something we thrive for, yet we do not try to work on it. Competency in managing the balance between social media and mental health has a long term benefits.

So alarming is the bad impact of social media on mental health, Therapy For You website, a website for mental health consultation in UK, published social media and mental health statistics as follows

- 41% of 18-24-year-olds say social media platforms make them feel anxious, sad or depressed
- Children that spend more than 3 hours on social media on school nights are twice as likely to experience mental health problems than those who spend less.
- 11 to 19-years-olds with a "mental disorder" are more likely to use social media every day (87.3%) than those without a disorder (77%)
- 7 out of 10 young people say they have experienced cyber bullying
- Anxiety and depression rates in young people have increased by 70% over the past 25 years
- Close to 40% of girls who spend 5+ hours a day on social media show symptoms of depression
- Using social media for more than two hours

per day is associated with poor self-rating of mental health

- 84% of young people support safe social media being taught in PSHE (personal, social, health and economic) (Writing Team, 2019).

This trend is not only in UK, but also in every corner of this world as internet and social media penetrate deeply in everyone's personal life.

Here is the explanation why having a healthy relationship with social media has to be on your priority list:

1. The world we live in is not the one seen on social media.

We sometimes ignore the fact that the world we live in is the real outside world, no filter and unedited. Sad truth is, we use social media as our hideaway place to run away from our responsibilities and problems. Eventually, staying connected through social media will not solve any of our problems, much worse, it adds up more problems into our lives. For example, you got into an argument with your friend and you decided to rant on social media, your other friends snitched about it to the person you had an argument with, it led into a misunderstanding and added more problem.

2. Having a healthy relationship with social media equals to staying connected with our surroundings.

Social media serves us any kind of contents, the ones that bring positive impacts as well as the destructive ones. It is a blessing if you are given the ability to be unbothered by the negativity

that pops on your timeline, but the rest of us absorbs its negativity. Staying conscious will help us maximize social media usage. Having a good relationship with your family and friends can lead to a more balanced social life.

A balanced social life can be seen from the fact that you are not oversharing everything on social media; that you are having fun on a certain event without worrying about what to post later. All these mean you have a healthy relationship with both social media and your real life.

Now that you've learned the reason why, you can follow these steps how to use social media responsibly:

1. Unfollow accounts that promote negativity.

As stated above, what you see on social media is not the reflection of the real life situation. Therefore unfollowing those accounts can help you better about yourself and not comparing yourself with other people because you think you are not good enough. Some of us may think it is childish to unfollow certain accounts, but what is the point of us following those toxic accounts – influencers that accentuate their looks with the high-end brands that not everyone can afford and creating a notion for people to have a perfect life like them – if it decreases your self-esteem, life satisfaction, and overall happiness? Better act right now...

2. Reduce screen time.

Globalwebindex's (2019) survey showed that an average of 3 hours is spent per day per person on social networks and messaging. This is a problematic situation as we do not

get to do more productive activities, and only scrolling through our apps. If you are concern about it, try reducing your screen time. It can be done in your smartphone settings by setting the downtime (scheduled time away from the screen), or setting time limits for certain apps only.

While reducing your phone usage, you can start reading your books that have been sitting in your bookshelf for a while now, or try cooking the recipes you have pinned at Pinterest.

3. Take a break.

Once someone told one of us, "If it is important, you will hear it from your circles, not social media," and we couldn't agree more. She tried to challenge herself by taking a break from social media and it turned out to be true. It was really hard at first to completely step back from social media (especially if you have a FOMO – Fear of Missing Out, an anxiety that an exciting or interesting event may currently be happening elsewhere, often aroused by posts seen on a social media website).

Why don't you dare yourself and try stepping back from social media? You can start it off for a day by turning off your social media notifications, and then for a week. And if you are finally ready, do it for a month. It can be done simply by just deactivating your social media account or delete the apps.

Thus, it is necessary to put your mental health above everything. If you feel that your social media do not bring any good to you, and instead, harm you in any way, pulling yourself back is always an option.

Developing the competence to have a balanced life is something that we need to learn as to stay sane amidst this ever-moving world with bombarded information. Competence in this aspect of life combines self-conscience, self-awareness, integrity, confidence, and strong personality,

and at the same time, knowledge and skills with technology advancement. This competence needs to be instilled and installed in every one that we are not controlled by gadgets and social media, but we have control over them and are able to use them to the fullest and optimum benefits./AR/

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