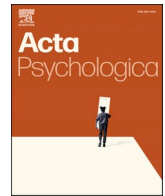


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Editorial

Editorial special issue: Social media usage across the lifespan



The overarching aim of this special issue is to explore online social behavior from a developmental perspective, examining how individuals engage with digital platforms from childhood through adulthood. In today's digital age, social media enables people to broadcast information anytime and anywhere, fundamentally transforming social interactions. Different platforms, such as chat messaging apps (e.g., WhatsApp, Telegram, Line, WeChat) and social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok), have become integral to everyday communication.

Understanding the impact of social media and digital technology is crucial for well-being and behavior at both individual and societal levels. These technologies shape how we communicate, form relationships, and perceive ourselves and others. The pervasive nature of digital interactions influences not just personal mental health and development but also group dynamics and societal trends. This special issue highlights the importance of addressing the various types of factors and influences to foster healthier, more supportive digital and real-world environments.

By examining these diverse topics, this special issue aims to enhance our understanding of the common and divergent features between online and in-person social environments across different stages of development. It highlights the significance of digital interactions in shaping social behavior and offers insights that are important for researchers, educators, and practitioners navigating the evolving landscape of social media.

The articles in this issue delve into the multifaceted impacts of these platforms on psychological well-being and behavior, offering a comprehensive look at how digital environments influence individuals at various developmental stages. From understanding the role of family, work, and personal conflicts in social networking site (SNS) usage to examining how differences in smart-phone usage are associated with loneliness or a lack thereof, the research presented here provides valuable insights into the complex dynamics of online interactions.

Some studies in this issue explore effects of social media on young children's development, such as the impact of screen time on preschoolers' sleep and communication skills, and bilingual children's digital media habits. Other articles focus on adolescents, investigating the interplay between mobile phone dependence and school adaptation, as well as the links between social media use and self-perception among American teenagers.

The studies focusing on adults in the special issue addresses for instance how social media influences parental experiences and competence, the role of influencer endorsements in promoting local food tourism, and the psychological effects of passive social media use among university students. Other topics explore broader societal impacts, such

as the potential of gamification to promote positive behavior change and the cognitive processes underlying cyberbullying in maltreated youth.

Below we briefly summarize the contributing studies published in the special issue.

[Tan et al. \(2023\)](#) investigate the role of family, work, and personal conflicts in driving dissatisfaction and discontinuation intentions among social networking site (SNS) users. Utilizing Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) and Merton's functions, the study identifies that these conflicts significantly increase user dissatisfaction, leading to intentions to quit SNS. The research highlights the moderating role of social media's manifest functions, suggesting strategies for user retention.

[Shoukat, Selem, Elgammal, Ramkissoon, and Amponsah \(2023\)](#) examine the impact of TikTok influencers on promoting local food tourism in Pakistan. Through self-determination and source credibility theories, their findings reveal that influencer endorsements significantly enhance memorable local food experiences, thereby increasing revisit intentions. This study provides practical guidance for leveraging social media in tourism marketing.

[Zhang, Wu, and Liu \(2023\)](#) explore the link between neuroticism and passive social media use, mediated by fear of missing out (FOMO) and online social support. Their research with 531 Chinese undergraduates finds that neuroticism indirectly drives passive use through these mediators, highlighting the psychological pathways influencing social media behavior.

[Xu's research \(2023\)](#) integrates intrinsic and extrinsic motivations with attachment theory to understand social media addiction. The study identifies emotional and functional attachments to platforms as critical factors, offering a comprehensive framework to examine user engagement and addictive behaviors.

[Axelsson et al. \(2022\)](#) discusses the adverse effects of screen time on preschoolers, including shorter sleep duration, poorer sleep quality, and communication issues. Their findings underscore the need for careful regulation of screen time to promote healthier developmental outcomes in young children.

[Wu et al. \(2022\)](#) investigate the interplay between parental autonomy support, mobile phone addiction, and cyberbullying victimization among high school students. Their study highlights the protective role of parental support and the moderating effect of teacher-student relationships in mitigating cyberbullying risks.

[Azhari, Toms, Pavlopoulou, Esposito, and Dimitriou \(2022\)](#) focus on Social Media Disorder (SMD) among British female adolescents, linking it to increased anxiety, loneliness, and poorer sleep. The research highlights platform-specific effects, with frequent Facebook posting correlating with sleep disturbances, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions.

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Sun, Lim, Low, and Kee (2022) introduce a comprehensive parental questionnaire to assess bilingual children's digital media exposure. Their study reveals significant differences in media habits pre- and post-COVID-19, offering insights into the digital environment of bilingual children and implications for early childhood education.

MacDonald and Aitken Schermer examine the relationship between loneliness and digital media use (MacDonald & Schermer, 2021). They find that loneliness is associated with longer screen time and social media app use, while frequent phone use for communication is negatively related to loneliness. Personality traits such as the need for affiliation and social recognition also predict loneliness.

Li, He, Zhao, Xu, and Yang (2022) explore how childhood maltreatment leads to cyberbullying through anger rumination and hostile attribution bias. Their integrative cognitive model offers insights into the cognitive processes underlying cyberbullying in maltreated youth, highlighting the need for targeted interventions.

Egmose et al. study the effects of social comparison orientation and Instagram use among mothers (Egmose et al., 2022). They find that professional profiles enhance knowledge, while "InstaParents" foster a sense of community. However, some profiles can decrease parenting competence, suggesting mixed impacts of social media on parental self-efficacy.

Choe and Yu (2022) investigate the reciprocal effects between mobile phone dependence and school adaptation among Korean adolescents. Their study reveals that better school adaptation reduces phone dependence, while phone dependence does not significantly affect school adaptation. Gender and socioeconomic factors also play roles in these dynamics.

Mann and Blumberg explore how American adolescents' social media use influences their self-presentation and reflection of possible selves (Mann & Blumberg, 2022). Their findings suggest that balancing positive and negative self-representations online is linked to better offline outcomes, with age differences impacting these behaviors.

Chaibal and Chaiyakul (2022) examine the correlation between smartphone/tablet use and gross motor development in children. Their study highlights that longer digital media use correlates with certain developmental delays, with factors like family income and parental medical history also influencing outcomes.

Bassanelli et al. provide a scientometric review of gamification in behavior change, analyzing 984 publications (Bassanelli, Vasta, Bucchiarone, & Marconi, 2022). Their findings identify key research trends and influential works, emphasizing the evolution from motivational techniques to rigorous methodologies in gamification design and application.

Through this special issue we offer a comprehensive overview of the psychological and behavioral impacts of social media and digital technology, providing valuable insights for researchers, educators, and practitioners. Through the studies presented here we also see there are several different aspects that needs to be addressed in the future within this field. Other researchers can find inspiration and ideas within this

special issue to develop and move forward the field through building on topics as well as methods presented in this issue.

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