



The Role of Social Media on Subjective Well-Being of Adolescents: a Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

The rapidly increasing use of social media among adolescents has attracted much research interest in recent years. This scoping review was conducted to examine the effects of social media on adolescents' subjective well-being, including the possible elements of positive effects, negative effects, and life satisfaction. The methodology used in this scoping review included gathering research articles from various databases from Publish or Perish and Scopus, spanning the years 2018 to 2023. After reviewing the selected 10 articles, it was found that seven of them supported the existing connection between social media use and adolescents' subjective well-being. On the contrary, three articles suggested no significant influence between social media and adolescents' subjective well-being.

Keywords: Social media; subjective well-being; adolescents

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Introduction

The widespread use of social media means that it is now an integral part of adolescent development. It is essential to understand and manage the impact of social media use, especially among adolescents and other vulnerable populations. Adolescents tend to use social media for a variety of reasons, including to satisfy their curiosity about new things and to seek entertainment. Social media plays an integral role among adolescents, with surveys showing that 90% of adolescents aged 13-17 have used social media, and 75% report having at least one active social media profile (Vogels et al., 2022). One survey found that 52% of internet users are Gen Z and young millennials

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(Taqiyya, [2023](#)). Social media provides opportunities for young people to discover new information, learn about current events, engage with issues, and connect with others.

Internet use has expanded globally and is now known to be used by approximately half of the world's population. The Internet can provide convenience to people in many ways, from communication to shopping, thereby facilitating access to different opportunities (Caplan, [2007](#)). The use of social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp) has increased dramatically over the past decade (Macrynikola & Miranda, [2019](#)). This increase in excessive Internet use can have an indirect impact on people's quality of life.

The lack of activity in the virtual environment has led to changes in the psychosocial behavior of individuals, leading to the definition of both pathological and healthy Internet use (Davis, [2001](#)). The results of Pizarro's research (2022) show that most college students spend their time on social media. The main purpose of students' use of social media is to increase their knowledge, get the latest information, and develop their careers. This study found no significant difference between the hours of social media use and students' academic performance, indicating that there is no significant negative impact of social media use on academic performance.

Previous research has identified the positive effects of social media use on subjective well-being, such as increased social support and comfort (Wu et al., [2023](#)). According to Wegmann et al., ([2017](#)), adolescents who are active users of social media have the ability to satisfy their personal urges and needs. The use of social media can provide pleasure and prevent the occurrence of negative emotions (Przybylski et al., [2013](#)). Therefore, the use of social media can be considered a medium to acquire positive experiences and overcome hardships (Wegmann et al., [2017](#)).

However, social media use also has various drawbacks, including potential issues that can affect individuals and society. Some studies indicate that social media use can negatively impact subjective well-being. A study conducted by Wirtz et al., ([2021](#)) found that more frequent daily social media use led to lower subjective well-being, specifically through an increase in negative affective states. Excessive use of social media with negative content may contribute to mental health problems such

as anxiety, depression, and stress (Çikrikci, [2016](#)). Research findings have shown that problematic Internet use has a negative impact on an individual's well-being (Mei et al., 2016; Zhang, [2015](#)).

Another negative impact of social media is shown by the research findings of Gerson et al. ([2016](#)), who showed that there is a significant negative relationship between social media with social comparison, impacting one's life satisfaction. Singh and Samah ([2018](#)) mentioned that excessive use of social media leads to students losing focusing on their learning, which can lead to addiction, poor real-life social interaction, decreased academic performance, lack of empathy with the surrounding environment, increased levels of anxiety and depression, and sleep disturbance. Despite these issues, it is clear that the use of social media has an interactive and feedback-driven nature that allows users to connect with each other, share information, and collaborate (Bosman & Zagenczyk, [2011](#)).

Some adolescents use social media to obtain specific information, which therefore positively impacts their subjective well-being. Researchers have discovered that increased social media usage is associated with greater positive feelings of individual well-being among college students (Valkenburg et al., [2006](#); Valenzuela et al., [2009](#)).

Subjective well-being is an evaluation that encompasses cognitive and affective aspects of something that influences a person's quality of life (Diener & Chan, [2011](#)). Subjective well-being involves the assessment of two main components, namely the cognitive and the affective. A high level of subjective well-being is characterized by cognitive assessments in the form of high life satisfaction and affective assessment in the form of high positive and low negative effects (Diener & Chan, [2011](#); Tov & Diener, [2013](#)).

In contrast, other studies on the association between social media and subjective well-being have yielded different results. In some studies, social media was found to have no effect on students' subjective well-being (Lee et al., [2011](#)). This is also supported by the findings of Phu & Gow ([2018](#)), who found no relationship between the intensity of social media use and subjective well-being.

Previous research has highlighted that the impact of social media on adolescents' subjective well-being is complex, involving different aspects, thus there are several research questions that need to be addressed (Çikrıkci, [2016](#); Gerson et al. [2016](#); Singh and Samah [2018](#)). Individual adolescents' responses to social media greatly differ, with some experiencing positive effects (Valkenburg et al., [2006](#); Valenzuela et al., [2009](#)) and others experiencing negative effects (Gerson et al., [2016](#); Singh and Samah [2018](#)). This range of responses will indicate whether social media use leads to changes in subjective well-being depending on the individual using it (Bailey et al., [2020](#)). Further research could focus on the impact of the positive and negative content that is generated and accessed by adolescents when they utilize social media, and how this content influences adolescents' subjective well-being.

In summary, the impact of social media use on subjective well-being is complex and may vary depending on the pattern of social media use. Further research could focus more on the influence of positive and negative content generated and consumed by adolescents on social media and how this content affects their subjective well-being. While there is evidence to support the relationship between social media use and subjective well-being, more research is needed to fully understand the impact of social media use on adolescents' subjective well-being. In addition, many studies have not differentiated the effects of different social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and others, so it is hoped that this will provide a more in-depth understanding of how the use of each platform can affect subjective well-being of young people using social media.

The problem statements for this study are as follows: What is the definition of social media use? How does social media use affect adolescents' subjective well-being? What are other factors that influence subjective well-being when using social media?

Method

This type of research is a form of 'scoping review' using methodological methods. Based on the concept of Arksey and O'Malley ([2005](#)), a scoping review is conducted by identifying the extent, scope and nature of research on a topic and identifying gaps in the literature. Specifically, in this study a systematic scoping review (ScR) based on the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews

and Meta-Analyses check (PRISMA-ScR; Tricco et al., [2018](#)) was used.

This ScR followed five sequential stages, as proposed by Peters et al., ([2020](#)). Firstly, it involved identifying research questions. Secondly, a systematic search process was carried out to identify relevant studies. Thirdly, studies were meticulously selected based on predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Fourthly, data from the selected studies were plotted to find patterns. Finally, the findings were summarized and reported in accordance with the established methodology.

Stage 1: Identification of research questions

The focus of the scoping review was to explore the use of social media on the subjective wellbeing of adolescents. The research questions are:

- a. What is the definition of social media use?
- b. How does social media use affect adolescents' subjective well-being?
- c. What other factors influence adolescents' subjective well-being in using social media?

Stage 2: Identifying relevant research

In order to identify relevant research, a detailed search method was established based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria described in [Table I](#) below:

Table 1.

Criteria for inclusion and exclusion

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Time Frame	2018 - 2023	Studies made outside of said years
Language	English	Non-english
Article type	Peer-reviewed research articles	Articles that are not empirical research including literature reviews, meta-analyses, etc.
Focus	Articles that focus on adolescent social media use in relation to subjective well-being	Articles that are not related to social media use or subjective well-being
Population criteria	High-school students and college students who are in the adolescence age category	Outside the scope/age of adolescence

Article searches in this scoping review were conducted on articles published from 2018 - 2023.

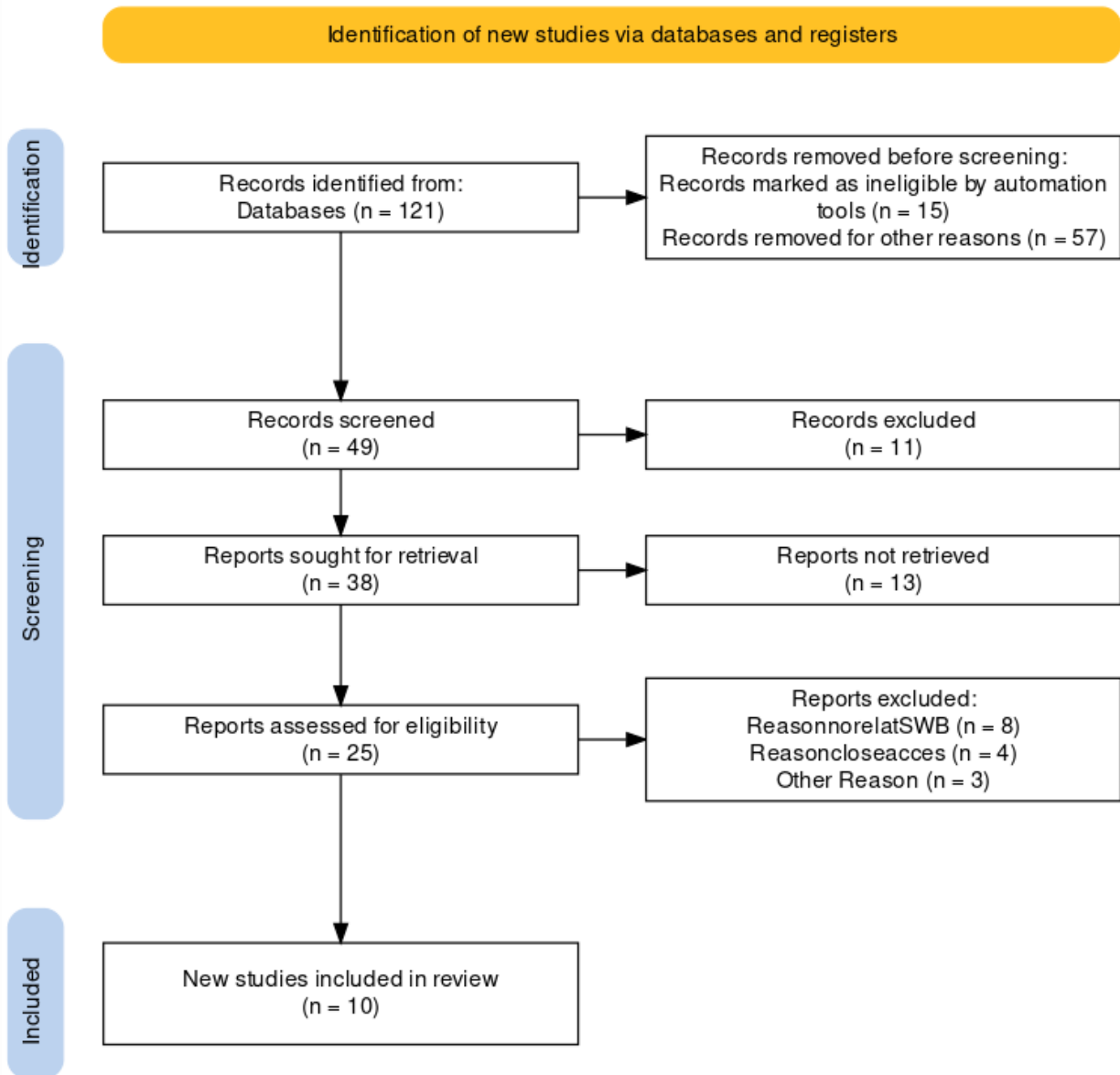
Data were obtained through various databases, namely Science Direct and Scopus. The keywords used were a combination of "Social media" OR "social media" OR "SNS" OR "subjective well-being" OR "SWB" OR "adolescence" AND "adolescent".

Stage 3: Study selection based on inclusion and exclusion criteria

The extraction process started with 121 articles, from which 57 articles were excluded for various reasons (including keywords, procedures, and others). Title screening then identified and removed 15 more articles with irrelevant topics. The screening process resulted in 49 articles. Reading the abstract of the article was the next step in the screening process.

As many as 10 articles were excluded because they were not relevant to the desired topic, which was adolescents. Then 39 article titles were reassessed and 26 articles were found to be suitable according to the predefined criteria. The final stage is the full-text screening, wherein the entire article is read and scrutinized, taking into account the inclusion and exclusion criteria of the study, to

obtain 10 final articles to be used as review material. In the PRISMA-SCR flowchart, [Figure 1](#) illustrates the steps of the search operation (Tricco et al., [2018](#)).



[Figure 1.](#) PRISMA-ScR Flowchart

Stage 4: Mapping the data

The data from the ten studies were methodically mapped using Microsoft Excel. The following table headings were used to categorise the included records: (1) article identity, including author, year of publication, and title; (2) location/country; (3) exposure; (4) research methods; (5) effect of social media use on adolescents' subjective well-being.

Stage 5: Collation, synthesis and reporting of findings

The relevant focus categories for each article were determined using the content from the charting step. Table A1 lists the categories described earlier in the data charting stage. These categories were used to characterise the findings of the articles and to answer the research questions. These categories were then used to identify, summarise and elaborate on the main themes found in the articles in the discussion.

Result

Records included

A total of 121 records were identified from the two search databases. After excluding similar findings, 49 records were screened and identified as meeting the inclusion and exclusion criteria. These records were excluded because the focus of the research was not the influence of social media use on subjective well-being. Finally, 10 papers were included in the synthesis, as summarized in Table A1.

Study characteristics

This scoping review included ten articles, all of which were empirical studies. This research was conducted in different countries, namely Taiwan (Hsu et al., 2020); (Lai et al., [2018](#)), Turkey (Koç & Turan, [2020](#)), USA and Canada (Wirtz et al., [2020](#)), China (Chai et al., [2019](#); Zhang et al., [2023](#)), Kazakhstan (Mahmood et al., [2023](#)), Australia (Jarman et al., [2021](#)), Croatia (Keresteš & Štulhofer., [2019](#)), Netherlands (Du et al., [2021](#)). The subjects of these studies were adolescents with the status of high school and university students.

Table 2.
Extracted data

No	Author, Year of Publication, Title	Country	Exposure	Research Method	Results
1	Koç dan Turan (2020) The Relationships Among Media social Intensity, Smartphone Addiction, and Subjective well-being of Turkish College Students.	Turkey	Social media (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat, LinkedIn, other)	The research method used in this study was simple sampling. The sample consisted of 734 undergraduate business students. Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg 1965). Smartphone Dependence Questionnaire (SDQ; Salehan and Negahban 2013). The SDQ consists of five items adapted from Salehan and Negahban. SNS Intensity Scale (SIS; Salehan and Negahban 2013). This scale consists of five items.	High intensity use of social media or social networking sites (SNS) is associated with high levels of smartphone addiction. The results showed that there was no significant relationship between social media intensity and subjective well-being. Smartphone addiction negatively affects subjective well-being with a value of ($p < 0.251$). High SNS intensity is associated with high levels of smartphone use, which lowers individuals' subjective well-being.
2	Wirtz et al. (2020) How and Why Social Media Affect Subjective Well-Being: Multi-Site Use and Social Comparison as Predictors of Change Across Time	Canada and USA	Facebook, Twitter, dan Instagram	There were 80 participants who gave informed consent to participate in the study. The research method used was a sampling experiment with multilevel modelling (MLM),	The results of this study show that greater use of social media is associated with a decrease in subjective well-being. This was mainly due to an increase in negative affective states. The study also found that social media use led to increased feelings of loneliness.
3	Hsu et al. (2020) RE-examining the Effect of Online Social Support on Subjective Well-Being: The Moderating Role of Experience	Taiwan	Facebook	This research method uses a two-stage approach. The first stage assesses construct reliability and validity, while the second stage examines the structural model among the latent constructs. Partial Least Squares (PLS)	Receiving and providing online support are key predictors of subjective well-being. The effect of receiving online support on subjective well-being was stronger for users with more experience.
4	Chai et al. (2019) Why social network site use fails to	China	Social Networking Sites (SNS)	This research method involves several steps to control for bias and	The results showed that the use of social networking sites (SNS) has a positive direct effect on

No	Author, Year of Publication, Title	Country	Exposure	Research Method	Results
	promote well-being? The roles of social overload and fear of missing out			to test the proposed hypothesis. There were 1319 Chinese adolescents who participated in this study.	adolescents' subjective well-being. It was added that individuals with high FOMO experienced a stronger negative impact of SNS use on social distress and subjective well-being compared to those with low FOMO.
5	Lai et al. (2018) Understanding adolescent students' use of Facebook and their <i>Subjective well-being</i> : a gender-based comparison.	Taiwan	Facebook	This was a cross-sectional study. Data were collected from a nationally representative sample of 1,121 adolescent students (aged 12-17 years), consisting of 625 boys and 586 girls. Subjective well-being was measured by three parameters: social support, life satisfaction and social satisfaction.	Social media use was positively associated with subjective well-being in both male and female students. Social media use had a greater impact on psychological well-being for male students than for female students ($Z=1.850$; $p<0.05$).
6	Mahmood et al. (2023) Social Networking Use Site, Personality, User Habit, and <i>Subjective well-being</i> : A Kazakhstani Pilot Study	Kazakhstan	Social Networking Sites (SNS) (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram)	The method used was measurement model testing. Data were collected from 251 participants who were measured using the 10-item Personal Well-Being Index (2013), which was used to assess subjective well-being. The Brief HEXACO Inventory (de Vries, 2013) was used to assess neuroticism and openness.	The findings show that there is no significant effect of social networking sites (SNS) use on individuals' subjective well-being.
7	Jarman et al. (2021) Social Media, body satisfaction and well-being among adolescents: A mediation model of appearance-ideal internalization and comparison	Australia	Social Media (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, dan Twitter)	This research was part of a longitudinal study. The study involved Australian adolescents between the ages of 11 and 17 who were asked to complete an online survey. Well-being was	The results showed that appearance-focused social media use was associated with lower body satisfaction and well-being in adolescents. Intensity of social media use did not influence body satisfaction with individual well-being. This study also found that internalising the muscular body

No	Author, Year of Publication, Title	Country	Exposure	Research Method	Results
				measured using the Life Satisfaction Scale. Social media intensity and use was assessed using four items from the Facebook Intensity Scale (Ellison et al., 2007). Three measures of body satisfaction used a modified version of the Body Shape Satisfaction Scale (Pingitore, Spring, & Garfield, 1997).	ideal was positively associated with body satisfaction and well-being.
8	Keresteš dan Štulhofer (2019) Adolescents' online social network use and life satisfaction: A latent growth curve modeling approach	Kroasia	OSN (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, dan lainnya)	This was a longitudinal study involving 701 female and 456 male students. Life satisfaction was assessed using 5 items adapted from the Personal Well-being Index-School Children (PWI). Time spent using online social networks was measured by questions. Parental Behaviour Questionnaire to monitor parental involvement. This study focuses on the period of transition from middle to late adolescence.	A significant relationship between the use of social media (online social networking - OSN) and life satisfaction. Adolescent girls who used more social media (Online Social Networking -OSN) showed lower life satisfaction (well-being). Higher use of online social networking (OSN) was associated with higher life satisfaction (well-being) among male adolescents. Gender differences may reflect motivations and vulnerabilities for OSN use.
9	Du. J et al. (2021) The reciprocal relationships between social media self-control failure, mindfulness and wellbeing: A longitudinal study	Netherlands	Facebook	This study used an enhanced cross-lagged panel model (RI-CLPM) to analyse the longitudinal relationship between social media self-control failure, mindfulness and well-being. The researchers collected data from 594 people.	The results of this study indicate that there is a negative relationship between social media self-control failure and subjective well-being. Life satisfaction predicts a decrease in social media self-control failure.

No	Author, Year of Publication, Title	Country	Exposure	Research Method	Results
10	Zhang et al. (2023) How social media usage affects psychological and subjective well-being: testing a moderated mediation model	China	Social Media Usage, (WeChat dan QQ)	<p>The method of data collection is an online survey completed by the participants. The scale used to measure subjective well-being is the College Student SWB Questionnaire (CSSWQ).</p> <p>The scale used to measure psychological well-being is the PWB scale.</p> <p>The scale used to measure social media is the Media and Technology Usage and Attitude Scale (MTUAS).</p> <p>A total of 1004 people were used in this study, of which 483 were female students and 521 were male students.</p>	<p>The results showed that there was a significant positive relationship between social media use and psychological well-being (PWB) with subjective happiness. This study also found that self-esteem and online social support acted as mediators in this relationship, while cyberbullying acted as a moderator. Social media use with PWB ($r=0.40$; $p<0.01$) and SWB ($r=0.46$; $p<0.01$)</p>

Discussion

Definition of social media usage

Social media use refers to activities that use digital communication platforms that are pervasive in people's daily lives and allow users to be "always online and always connected" to the online world, allowing their users to interact, share content, and form social networks online (Du, J. et al. [2021](#); Lai et al. [2018](#)). Social media refers to platforms that provide various satisfactions such as social contact and entertainment, and includes services such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp (Du, J. et al. [2021](#); Lai et al. [2018](#)). These platforms are characterized by their ability to provide a sense of belonging and presence in an online community, while also presenting issues such as fear of missing out, online comparison, and potential overuse, which can affect users' well-being (Dutt, B. [2023](#); Lai et al. [2018](#)).

The impact of social media use on young people's subjective well-being.

The findings from this scoping review suggest that social media usage exerts diverse influences on individuals. Some studies indicate that the intensity of social media use, by spending more time on social media, may be associated with positive feelings and well-being in college students (Orben & Dienlin, [2019](#)). There is also a prediction that social media use may influence life satisfaction (subjective well-being) in adolescents. This is reinforced by the findings of Gerson ([2016](#)), which shows a positive relationship between the intensity of social media use and an individual's subjective well-being, especially with regard to their eudaimonic well-being, where subjective well-being is measured by life satisfaction and eudaimonic well-being. Furthermore, the findings of Lai et al., ([2018](#)) further explain that social media use is positively related to subjective well-being. According to the findings of Lamash ([2023](#)), there is a significant correlation between well-being and social interaction skills and social media use. This is reinforced by research by Zhang et al., ([2023](#)), which states that social media has a positive effect on psychological well-being (PWB) and subjective happiness (subjective well-being). Chai et al. ([2019](#)) suggested that the use of social networking sites (SNS) has a positive direct effect on adolescents' subjective well-being.

However, previous research on the effects of social media use on well-being has yielded mixed results. In addition to positive effects, social media use may also produce negative effects. A study by Kross et al. ([2013](#)) found that social media (social networking sites-SNS) use decreased students' well-being. The study found that a greater use of social media, specifically Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, was associated with lower subjective well-being. The study also found that social media use leads to heightened feelings of loneliness. There is a significant negative relationship between social media use (Online Social Networking - OSN) and life satisfaction among adolescents. Particularly, adolescent girls who use social media more have lower life satisfaction. This research on both genders has been conducted for almost two years (Keresteš & Štulhofer, [2019](#)). Based on other research conducted, it shows that the frequency of social media use is correlated with lower life satisfaction, although all effect sizes are still relatively small (Paez et al., [2019](#)).

Other findings show no relationship between social media use and subjective well-being. The results of Mahmood et al., ([2023](#)) showed that there was no significant effect of social media use (social

networking sites-SNS) on users' subjective well-being. This finding is supported by Jarman et al. (2021) who found that the intensity of social media use is not directly related to subjective well-being. However, when users engage in certain content activities that focus on appearance, there is a relationship with body satisfaction and subjective well-being. This result is supported by Phu and Gow's (2018) study, which shows that there is no relationship between the intensity of social media use and subjective well-being. Koç and Turan (2020) further explained that the high intensity of using social media (Social Networking Sites-SNS) has an effect on the high use of smartphones, which reduces the level of individual subjective well-being.

Factors that contribute to the subjective well-being of adolescents in using social media

The analysis of several articles shows that there are differences in subjective well-being between male and female adolescents. Research by Lai et al. (2018) shows that social media use with subjective well-being is stronger in male students than in female students. In fact, the research conducted by Keresteš and Štulhofer (2019) shows that gender differences reflect vulnerability to social media use. In this case, female adolescents who use social media more have lower life satisfaction. This is in contrast to a study by Lamash (2023), which found no significant correlation between age and happiness, and no gender differences related to happiness.

Results from another study showed a negative relationship between social comparison on social media and both measures of subjective well-being (life satisfaction and eudaimonic well-being) (Gerson et al., 2016). It is expected that reducing social comparison and promoting direct interactions and social connections on social media can reduce the negative effects of social media use (Dhir, 2018; Wirtz et al., 2020). Koç and Turan. (2020) show that a high intensity of social media use is associated with a high level of smartphone use, thus reducing the level of subjective well-being of individuals. It is further explained that the intensity of using social media (Social Networking Sites-SNS) in the younger generation is more for improving social networking than for subjective well-being.

It is further explained that the use of social networking sites (SNS) is more related to individual self-expression. Du et al (2021) explained that life satisfaction also predicts a decrease in social media

self-control failure. It is further explained that low self-esteem causes adolescents to become addicted to smartphones (Koç & Turan, [2020](#)). In addition to self-esteem and self-disclosure, mindfulness also plays a role. Mindfulness can mediate between the lack of self-control in social media use, which can be impaired, and decrease subjective vitality. It has also been explained that fear of missing out (FOMO) moderates social burden restraint. Individuals with high FOMO may experience stronger negative effects from social media use, which in turn may affect their subjective well-being (Chai et al., [2019](#)).

Conclusion

A screening of 121 articles was conducted, which resulted in many exclusions according to the criteria, leaving 10 articles for review. Among the review of the 10 articles, seven articles showed that there is a positive or negative effect of social media use on adolescents' subjective well-being. Several researchers found that social media use had a positive effect on well-being. However, the intensity of social media use was also found to have a negative effect on adolescents' subjective well-being. Specifically, it is further explained that the higher the intensity of social media use, the more negative emotions adolescents experience in relation to their subjective well-being. High intensity of SNS use was also correlated with high levels of smartphone addiction.

Based on the literature review conducted, three articles were found contrastingly stating that there is no influence between social media and adolescents' subjective well-being. There are several other aspects that affect subjective well-being, including self-esteem, self-disclosure, social comparison in the social environment, the mindfulness of an individual, and FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), which also influences an adolescent's subjective well-being. From this review, there are several recommendations for further research. Future research would be benefit and become more effective if it combined offline and online social networks to see their impact on well-being. In addition, there is a need for further research on the influence of specific social media content on adolescents' subjective well-being. In practice, there is a need for some form of social interaction intervention for adolescents as a form of treatment for excessive social media use.

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