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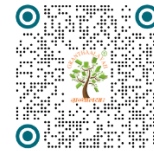
SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AND MENTAL WELL-BEING: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH TRENDS AND COLLABORATION NETWORKS

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The present study aims to examine the evolution of research on social media usage and mental well-being through a comprehensive bibliometric analysis. The study investigates publication growth, co-authorship patterns among researchers, institutional collaborations, and country-level research contributions in order to understand the intellectual structure and global development of this research domain.

Methodology: The study is based on bibliometric analysis using data retrieved from the Scopus database. A total of 1,304 journal articles published in English were selected after applying subject area, document type, publication stage, and source type filters. The collected data were analyzed using bibliometric techniques such as publication trend analysis, co-authorship analysis, organizational collaboration analysis, and country-level collaboration mapping through visualization tools. In addition, the TCCM (Theory-Context-Characteristics-Methodology) framework was applied to identify major research trends, existing gaps, and future research directions within the literature.

Findings: The findings reveal a significant growth in research on social media usage and mental well-being, particularly after 2018, with a sharp rise during and after the COVID-19 pandemic period. The co-authorship analysis indicates that the collaboration structure among researchers is relatively fragmented, although certain authors such as Mark D. Griffiths occupy central positions within the network. Institutional analysis highlights the important contribution of organizations such as South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust and The Alan Turing Institute. At the country level, the United States emerges as the leading contributor, followed by the United Kingdom, China, and India. The overlay visualization further suggests a gradual shift in research activity from Western nations toward emerging Asian economies.

Research Limitations: The study is limited to journal articles indexed in the Scopus database and published in the English language. Other databases, publication types, and non-English studies were not included, which may limit the overall coverage of the research domain.

Research Implications: The study provides valuable insights for researchers, policymakers, healthcare professionals, and educational institutions by identifying major research trends, collaboration patterns, and emerging areas in the field. It also offers a foundation for future interdisciplinary research related to digital behavior and mental well-being.

Originality: This study contributes to the literature by providing a systematic and comprehensive bibliometric overview of research on social media usage and mental well-being. It highlights the evolution of the field, identifies major contributors and collaboration networks, and proposes future research directions for advancing knowledge in this rapidly growing domain.

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Keywords: Social Media, Mental Well-being, Mental Health, Anxiety, Depression, Bibliometric Analysis, Co-authorship Analysis, Research Collaboration, Digital Behavior, Psychological Well-being

INTRODUCTION

Digital technology has rapidly advanced in the past decade, communication, information access and interaction has transformed in several ways. Social Media platforms are now regarded as one of the most impactful developments of this century, Snapchat, Instagram, LinkedIn have consumed our life, by facilitating creation, sharing and exchange of information and ideas, all in real time. Social interactions are now fundamentally changed due to social media, communication has surpassed the geographical zones, online communities are fostered leading to the self-expression and dissemination of information using the social media platforms [Naslund et al. \(2020\)](#).

Dramatic expansion of social media has yielded several benefits like ease of knowledge sharing, stronger social connections, plethora of options for entertainment, opportunity of professional networking but with all these positives, negatives are not left behind, the excess use and immersion has also posed the risk of degradation of mental well-being and health [Sharma et al. \(2020\)](#). Policy makers, educators, healthcare professionals and researchers have tremendously focused on comprehension of multifaceted relationship between psychological outcomes and usage of social media, predominantly among adolescents and adults who are stated as active in the consumption and usage

Mental well-being is a multi-layered concept which covers social, psychological and emotional functioning. It illustrates one's potential to handle daily stressors, sustain positive interpersonal relationships, realize the individual potential, and be a meaningful contributor to the society. The World Health Organization has clearly pointed out to the fact that mere absence of mental illness is not a sign a sound mental health, but it has to encompass it with individual's ability to function effectively in social and personal lives [O'Reilly et al. \(2019\)](#) Everyday experiences are now embedded through social media which makes it a prominent area for academic research. Contradictory findings are exhibited in the existing literature, relating to the outcomes of social media consumption on mental health. Although social media encourages community engagement, social support, identity development and access to the wide array of information related to psychological well being, these online communities can mitigate the feelings of loneliness, it can induce help seeking behavior, and can enable peer support [Naslund et al. \(2017\)](#), [Naslund et al. \(2020\)](#). Mental health promotion is now done using social media as an integral tool, by the way of interventions which are evidence based, awareness campaigns, they become useful when the audience is young and uses digital technologies [O'Reilly et al. \(2019\)](#). On the contrary, the researchers like [Ulvi et al. \(2022\)](#), [Beyari \(2023\)](#) suggest that excessive usage will result in severe psychological consequences, like depression, anxiety, loneliness, body image issues, stress, insomnia, low life satisfaction and the hideous of all cyber bullying and online harassment [O'Reilly et al. \(2018\)](#). [Popat and Tarrant \(2023\)](#), [Soraci et al. \(2025\)](#) have also argued that psychological wellbeing can be detrimental in highlighting validation seeking behaviors, exposure to unrealistic standards and fear of missing out (FoMO). Researches in recent time have neither confirmed negative nor straightforward relationship among usage of social media and mental well-being. The outcome relies upon intensity, motive of usage, nature of engagement. For example, if the usage is done for quality interaction it proves to be advantageous for the well-being, and on the flip side if consumption is excessive and mindless it aids to the adverse outcomes psychologically, [Chen et al. \(2026\)](#), argues that it's more dependent on individual and contextual factors, and not much on frequency. Due to fragmentation in the investigation of social media usage implications on mental health, it still requires the in depth analysis to map out the structure and evolution of social media on mental health [Sharma et al. \(2020\)](#), [Ulvi et al. \(2022\)](#).

So this study, conducts the bibliometric analysis to present quantitative and systematic approach to evaluate the development of scientific knowledge within a research domain. This method will help in identifying intellectual foundations, research hotspots, and future research directions. The findings are anticipated to drive exhaustive understanding of the academic landscape of this area and project significant route for further research, evidence-based interventions and policy developments.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

SOCIAL MEDIA AND MENTAL WELL-BEING: CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS

The upsurge of social media platforms has intrinsically refined the communication modes and patterns, social interactions and information exchange across the world. Social media denotes to digital platforms that empowering the users to interact, create and share the content virtually. Platforms such as LinkedIn, Snapchat, Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube have become inevitable elements of contemporary lifestyle. Their widespread adoption and abundant consumption has motivated researchers to investigate not only their interactive characteristics but also their real time implications for subjective and emotional well-being.

Mental well-being is a multifaceted construct congruent of emotional, psychological, and social functioning. Mental well-being goes beyond the absence of mental illness and is inclusive of the capacity to cope with life stressors in daily course of routine, having productive and positive relationships, and be meaningful to the society. As a result, of which the relationship between social media usage and mental health has become a vital area of interdisciplinary academic inquiry involving psychology, sociology, psychiatry, public health and communication studies. The prolific growth of social media has invoked challenging perspectives about its influence on mental health. On one hand, some scholars argue that social media promotes social ties, facilitates emotional health, and facilitates access to therapy, thereby enabling better chances of psychological well-being, and on the other hand, others suggest that

abundant engagement leads to social comparison anxiety, depression, loneliness, addictive behaviors and, cyberbullying. These varying evidences highlights that social media is neither inherently harmful nor beneficial; rather, its power depends on the intensity, nature and purpose of use [Sharma et al. \(2020\)](#). Recent data has predominantly emphasized upon the intricacies of this relationship. Rather than focusing simply on the amount of time spent on the social media platforms, scholars now examine the different patterns of online engagement with social contexts along with the individual characteristics, and shape mental health outcomes. This paradigm shift has deeply contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of the role played by social media in contemporary lives of the people.

POSITIVE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON MENTAL WELL-BEING

Despite of the widespread concerns regarding the potential adverse effects of social media, a substantial body of literature shed the light on its positive contributions to mental health. One of the most cited advantages is that it broadens the scope of social connectedness. Social media platforms provides the individuals a medium to maintain existing relationships along with establishing new connections, and additionally participate in communities based on common interests and experiences.

[Naslund et al. \(2020\)](#) mentioned that social media offers different opportunities for social communication and support, specifically for individuals who are experiencing mental health issues. With the help of online communities, users can seek advice, share experiences, and obtain emotional motivation from associates facing similar circumstances in personal and professional life. Such interactions may ease the feelings of isolation from the society and bring in a sense of belonging, which are inevitable determinants of psychological well-being. Similarly, [O'Reilly et al. \(2019\)](#) puts across that teens, mental health practitioners and educational professionals, perceived social media as an effective platform for promoting positive mental well-being, potentially. Participants confirmed that social media helps in rapid dissipating of mental health information and gives easy and accessible channels through which students can seek support. The scholars, concluded that, although there are certain risks, social media still possesses impactful potential as a tool for mental health promotion.

Students who experience societal stigma or reluctance to go for traditional mental health services can find virtual environments more functional and less intimidating. [Naslund et al. \(2017\)](#) found that many social media users with mental health conditions proactively use digital platforms to share difficult experiences of life, collect information, and seek help from peer support networks. Such usage can be congruent with the formal mental health services and contribute to the improved psychological outcomes. [Popat and Tarrant \(2023\)](#) stated that self-expression depicts a crucial aspect of social media engagement, empowering users to communicate emotions, receive feedback constructively and develop a sense of personal agency. These methods may draw positively towards the self-esteem and psychological well-being when interactions remain supportive. Also, social media can easy up the availability of educational resources and mental health-related information. Users heavily rely on digital platforms to learn about mental health conditions, coping mechanisms, and available support services. This accessibility enhances mental health literacy and inspires active engagement with subjective well-being.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND DEPRESSION

Among the several psychological outcomes studied in the literature, depression has received plethora of scholarly attention. Innumerable studies have examined whether social media engagement adds to the symptoms of depression and if certain forms of usage escalate psychological fragility.

A systematic review formulated by [Sharma et al. \(2020\)](#) exhibited that immoderate social media use is often associated with depression, significantly among Gen Z. The review portrayed problems associated with excessive screen time, resulting in emotional and habitual attachment through online interactions, and immersion into potentially pernicious content. Similarly, [Ulvi et al. \(2022\)](#) reported that intensified social media use is frequently correlated with depression and other mental health issues, specifically among naive populations. Reasoning for these relations includes the attribute of social media users to indulge in upward and unrealistic social comparisons. Users are perpetually exposed to idealized and fabricated portrayals of peers' lives, in terms of achievements, relationships, and physical appearance. Such visuals have the ability to create over the top expectations and instill the feelings of dissatisfaction, inadequacy, and low self-worth. Over the period of time, these experiences play a major role in contributing to the dissatisfaction and releasing depressive symptoms. Research embedding on adolescents has come up with similar observations. [Deepa and Priya \(2020\)](#) stated crucial associations between disproportionate social media use and depression among teens. The findings of their suggested that boosted engagement with several social networking platforms and elongated time spent online were correlated to adverse mental health results. Nonetheless, recent studies depict that the nexus between social media and depression may not be always negative. [Chen et al. \(2026\)](#) argued that purposeful forms and active social media engagement did not directly predict diminishing mental well-being outcomes. In contrast, certain forms of interaction displayed enhanced interpersonal relationships and life satisfaction. These findings pinpoint that the effects of social media relies not only on the quantity of engagement but also on the quality and nature of usage.

Resultantly, recent evidences do recognize depression, as a multifaceted outcome, driven by offline relationships, individual characteristics, patterns of digital behavior and individuals' personality traits. Social media may intensify existing weaknesses instead of directly inducing depressive symptoms in all users.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND ANXIETY

Anxiety is regarded as yet another significant dimension with respect to social media studies. The persistent availability of continuous exposure to information, online communication, and the stress to be socially connected has created serious concerns which heighten anxiety levels among users. The always on connetvity has exhibited positive relationships between elevated social media use and symptoms of anxiety. [Ulvi et al. \(2022\)](#) emphasized on the fact that adolescents and young adults are at the risk of anxiety if their social media engagement is high. Correspondingly, [Beyari \(2023\)](#) observed that interactive attributes such as, comments, likes and follower counts result in psychological distress and anxiety. Digital environments consist of social pressures, as the users are under prolonged monitoring in terms of interactions and public feedback. The evaluation metrics based on follower count leads to the sense of popularity and acceptability, these futile horizon develops issues of social approval and performance anxiety. [O'Reilly et al. \(2018\)](#) reiterated that teens themselves recognize social media as a medium of anxiety. Participants mentioned that online conversations often accelerate pressure to assert a positive image, respond on immediate basis to messages, and stay continuously connected with the contemporaries, not meeting these expectations may yield emotional discomfort and stress. Studies have also connected anxiety to uncertainty orbiting around online relationships. Social media interactions do miss out on non-verbal cues which helps in effective communication in one-to-one offline settings. Social misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and apprehensions related to online reputation may therefore fetch elevated anxiety levels.

Nevertheless, some researches argue that social media can also lower down anxiety levels under some conditions. Online communities may offer opportunities for self-disclosure, emotional support, and access to mental health resources. These benefits seem relevant for people going through difficulties establishing offline relationships or social anxiety. Subsequently, anxiety-related outcomes are potentially dependent majorly on the purpose and context of social media engagement.

SOCIAL MEDIA, LIFE SATISFACTION, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

Psychological well- being comprises of a crucial component known as “Life Satisfaction”, which is the integral part of social media research. Researchers have rapidly evaluated if digital engagement increases or decreases the individuals' perceptions towards their quality of life. [Chen et al. \(2026\)](#), suggested that individuals will feel satisfied with their life if social media added to the meaning social interactions in their life, therefore, proving digital communications makes the person happier but. [Soraci et al. \(2025\)](#) stated that social media can lower down the levels of satisfaction with life as people try to keep up with every existing trend and getting nowhere, dissatisfaction in real life penetrates to social media as well, by seeking validation leading to problematic online engagement, make people vulnerable and prone to psychological difficulties

Quality of interaction is regarded more important than the quantity of conversations happening on a social media platform, users who are engrossed in substantial, useful and supportive interactions tend to be more content with the life rather than people who just scroll absentmindedly. So, the findings highlight the broadening consensus that social media usage cannot be single handedly measured through screen time.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a bibliometric approach to systematically examine the growing body of literature on social media usage and mental well-being. Bibliometric analysis is particularly useful in identifying research trends, collaboration patterns, and the structural development of a field over time. To ensure comprehensive coverage and reliability, the Scopus database was selected as the primary source of data, given its extensive indexing of high-quality peer-reviewed journals across multiple disciplines.

A structured search strategy was developed using relevant keywords associated with social media platforms (such as “social media,” “Instagram,” “Facebook,” “Twitter,” “YouTube,” and “TikTok”) and mental well-being constructs (including “mental well-being,” “mental health,” “stress,” “anxiety,” and “depression”). The search was restricted to the TITLE field to ensure that the retrieved studies had a direct and explicit focus on the topic. The initial search resulted in 2,992 documents.

Table 1

Table 1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria		
Criteria Category	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Document Type	Peer-reviewed journal articles	Conference papers, book chapters, editorials, reviews, notes, and other non-article types

Language	English	Non-English language documents
Publication Stage	Final stage publications	Articles in press or early access/preprints
Subject Area	Business, Management and Accounting (BUSI); Social Sciences (SOCI); Economics (ECON); Psychology (PSYC); Computer Science (COMP); Decision Sciences (DECI); Arts and Humanities (ARTS); Health Professions (HEAL); Environmental Science (ENVI); Multidisciplinary (MULT)	All other subject areas outside the selected disciplines
Keywords (Title/Abstract/Keywords)	Articles that mention terms such as “social media”, “Facebook”, “Instagram”, “Twitter”, “YouTube”, “TikTok”, “mental well-being”, “mental health”, “stress”, “anxiety”, and “depression”	Articles not related to social media usage and mental well-being
Time Period	Not restricted (includes all years up to the date of search)	None
Source Type	Journal publications	Conference proceedings, books, magazines, trade publications, and other non-journal sources

Source: Author’s analysis

To enhance the quality and relevance of the dataset, a step-by-step screening process was carried out following the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) protocol. In the identification stage, all records obtained from the database were compiled. During the screening phase, subject area filters were applied to include only relevant disciplines such as Social Sciences, Psychology, Business and Management, Decision Sciences, Computer Science, Economics, Environmental Science, Arts and Humanities, Health Professions, and Multidisciplinary studies, which reduced the dataset to 2,315 documents.

In the eligibility stage, further refinement was carried out by limiting the document type to journal articles, resulting in 1,379 records. To maintain consistency and ensure academic rigor, only documents in their final publication stage were retained (1,327 records). Additionally, the source type was restricted to journals, which slightly reduced the dataset to 1,325 documents. Finally, only publications written in English were included, leading to a final sample of 1,304 articles for analysis.

This systematic filtering process ensured transparency and replicability while minimizing the inclusion of irrelevant or low-quality studies. The final search string incorporated all Boolean operators and Scopus-specific filters, allowing the study to be reproduced by future researchers.

The analysis was conducted using bibliometric techniques aligned with the research objectives. A temporal analysis was performed to examine the evolution of publications over time (RQ1). Co-authorship analysis at the author level was used to explore collaboration patterns among researchers (RQ2). Similarly, institutional and country-level co-authorship networks were analyzed to identify leading contributors and global collaboration trends (RQ3 and RQ4). Network visualization methods were employed to better understand the structure and dynamics of these relationships.

In addition to mapping the existing literature, the study also applies the TCCM (Theory, Context, Characteristics, Methodology) framework to propose a structured future research agenda. This helps in identifying theoretical gaps, contextual limitations, and methodological opportunities, thereby offering meaningful directions for advancing research in the area of social media usage and mental well-being.

Figure 1

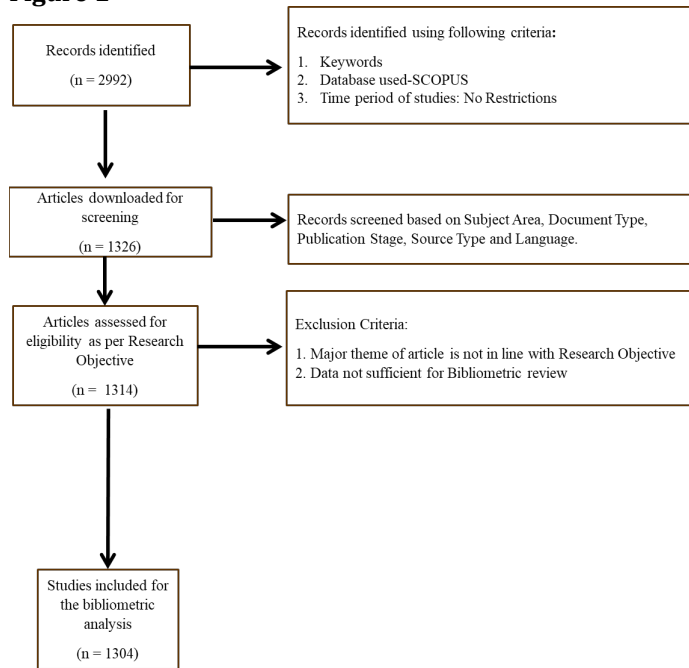


Figure 1 PRISMA Framework, adapted from Moher et al. (2009)
Source: Author's analysis

Figure 1

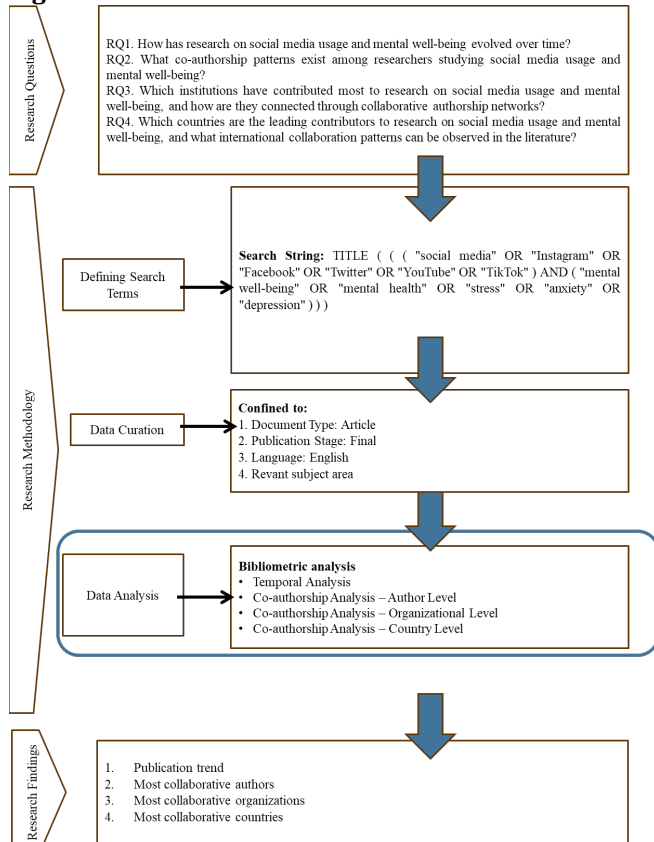


Figure 2 Research Design

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

TEMPORAL ANALYSIS

The temporal analysis clearly shows that research on social media usage and mental well-being has moved from a relatively neglected area to a rapidly expanding field of academic inquiry. In the early years, particularly between 2011 and 2014, the number of publications remained very limited, with only a handful of studies appearing each year. This suggests that the relationship A more pronounced acceleration is observed after 2018. The number of publications rises sharply from 28 in 2018 to 76 in 2020, indicating that the topic started attracting mainstream academic interest. This surge can be linked to rising global concerns around digital addiction, anxiety, depression, and overall mental health in the digital age. The COVID-19 pandemic period further appears to have intensified this interest, as reflected in the steady increase from 110 publications in 2021 to 141 in 2022 and 188 in 2023.

between social media and mental health had not yet gained significant scholarly attention and was still in its exploratory stage.

A gradual shift becomes visible from 2015 onwards, where the number of studies begins to increase, albeit at a moderate pace. This period reflects the growing awareness among researchers about the psychological implications of increasing social media usage, especially with the widespread adoption of platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

The upward trend continues strongly in recent years, with 233 publications in 2024 and a peak of 269 in 2025. This consistent growth highlights that social media and mental well-being have now become a well-established and highly relevant research domain. The relatively lower figure for 2026 (132 publications) should be interpreted with caution, as it likely reflects incomplete indexing rather than an actual decline in research activity.

Figure 3

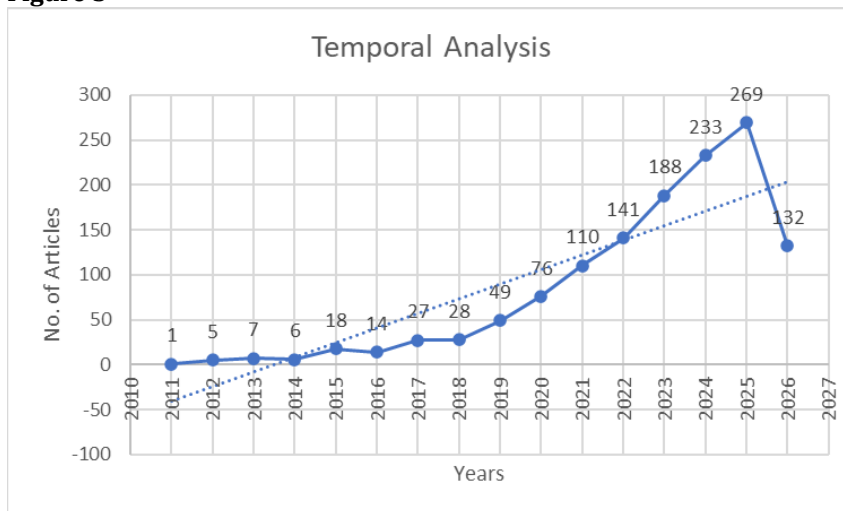


Figure 3 Temporal Growth in Literature

Source: Author's Analysis

CO-AUTHORSHIP ANALYSIS – AUTHOR LEVEL

The co-authorship analysis provides a detailed view of how researchers collaborate in the field of social media usage and mental well-being. The dataset includes a large pool of 4,475 authors, all of whom met the minimum threshold criteria. However, despite this wide participation, the collaboration structure appears to be relatively fragmented. A significant observation is that not all authors are interconnected, and the largest connected network consists of only 44 authors. This indicates that, although the field is growing rapidly, collaboration is still concentrated within smaller groups rather than across a unified global network.

The network visualization further reveals the presence of seven distinct clusters, each representing a group of researchers who frequently collaborate with one another. These clusters highlight the existence of multiple independent research communities working on similar themes but with limited interaction between them. The total of 148 links and a total link strength of 154 suggest that while collaborative ties do exist, they are not particularly dense across the entire network.

A closer look at the visualization shows that certain authors occupy more central positions within their respective clusters. In particular, Mark D. Griffiths emerges as a key figure in the network, with a relatively large node size and multiple connections to other researchers. His position indicates a strong collaborative presence and suggests that he plays an important role in connecting different research groups. Around him, several smaller nodes are linked, reflecting ongoing collaborative efforts with a range of co-authors.

Other clusters appear to be more tightly knit but internally focused. For instance, some groups show dense interconnections among a handful of authors, suggesting strong within-group collaboration but limited external linkages. At the same time, there are clusters that are only loosely connected to the central network, indicating emerging or niche research collaborations.

Figure 4

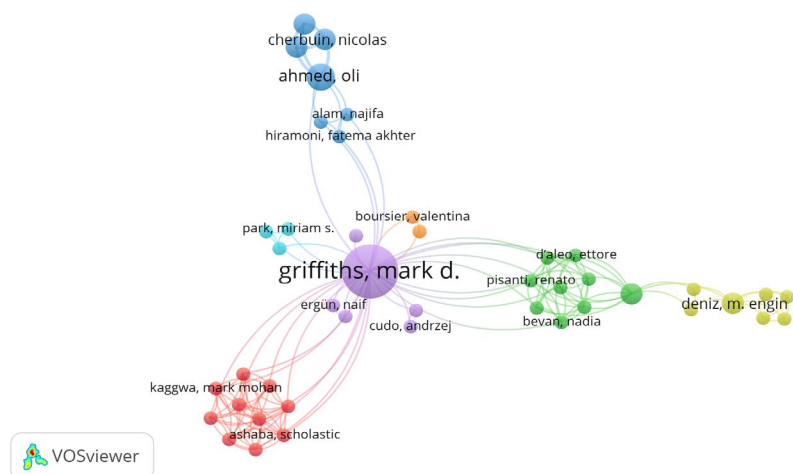


Figure 4 Network Visualization of Authors

Source: Author's Analysis

The overlay visualization of the co-authorship network offers a deeper understanding of how collaboration among researchers in the area of social media usage and mental well-being has evolved over time. The color gradient, ranging from darker blue tones (earlier contributions) to lighter green and yellow shades (more recent work), helps in tracing the temporal development of collaborative research in this field.

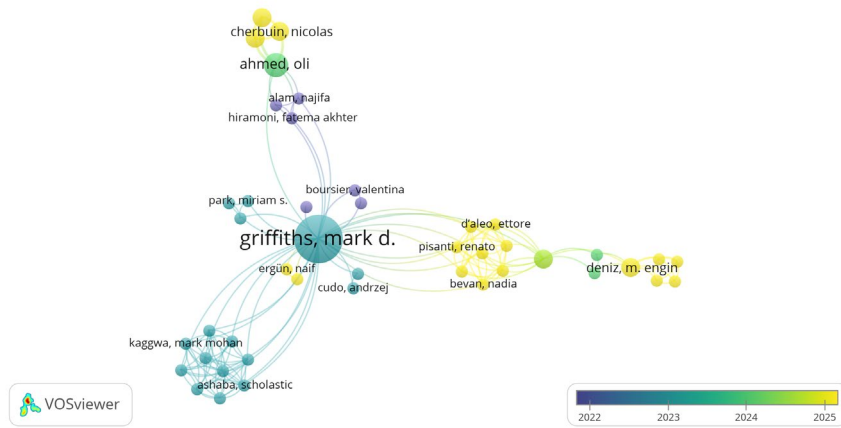
One of the most striking observations from the network is the central role played by Mark D. Griffiths. His node appears significantly larger than others and is positioned at the core of the network, indicating both high research productivity and strong collaborative linkages. More importantly, his connections span across different clusters and time periods, suggesting that he has consistently contributed to the field and acted as a bridge between earlier and more recent research collaborations.

The earlier phase of collaboration is reflected in authors such as Fatema Akhter Hironomi, Najifa Alam, and Oli Ahmed, whose nodes appear in relatively darker shades. These researchers appear to have contributed to the foundational work in this domain, particularly during the initial years when the topic was still gaining academic attention. Their connections are relatively focused, indicating smaller and more concentrated collaboration groups.

As the field progressed, newer clusters began to emerge, particularly around authors such as Nadia Bevan, Renato Pisanti, and Ettore D'Aleo. These nodes appear in greenish tones, reflecting more recent collaborative activity. The connections within this group are denser, suggesting a growing tendency toward team-based research and interdisciplinary collaboration.

The most recent developments, indicated by yellow-colored nodes, are visible in clusters involving authors like Engin M. Deniz and Nicolas Cherbuin. These clusters are relatively more compact, but their positioning on the periphery suggests that they represent emerging research groups that are still in the process of integrating into the broader collaboration network.

Another noticeable pattern is that while several clusters are internally well-connected, the links between clusters are relatively limited. This indicates that although collaboration within groups has strengthened over time, cross-group collaboration is still evolving. The presence of bridging authors—particularly Griffiths—plays a crucial role in maintaining some level of connectivity across the network.

Figure 5**Figure 5 Overlay Visualization of Authors****Source: Author's Analysis**

CO-AUTHORSHIP ANALYSIS – ORGANIZATION LEVEL

The organizational co-authorship analysis provides a useful picture of how institutions are contributing to and collaborating in the field of social media usage and mental well-being. A total of 3,151 organizations were identified in the dataset, all of which met the minimum threshold criteria. However, despite this wide participation, the collaboration network appears somewhat fragmented, as only a subset of 41 organizations forms the largest connected component. This suggests that, similar to author-level collaboration, institutional partnerships are still developing and are not yet fully integrated across the field.

The network structure is divided into six distinct clusters, indicating the presence of multiple institutional collaboration groups working somewhat independently. Among these, certain institutions emerge as key contributors and connectors within the network. Notably, *South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust* occupies a central position, acting as a major hub linking different institutions. Its strong collaborative ties with organizations such as *Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust* and *The Alan Turing Institute* highlight its significant role in facilitating interdisciplinary research, particularly at the intersection of mental health services and digital behavior studies.

Another visible cluster includes departments focused on child and adolescent studies, suggesting that a portion of the research is concentrated on younger populations and their interaction with social media in relation to mental well-being. These clusters indicate that institutional collaborations are often shaped by shared research specializations, such as clinical psychology, public health, or data science.

Figure 6**Figure 6 Network Visualization of Organizations****Source: Author's Analysis**

The overlay visualization of institutional co-authorship offers a time-based perspective on how collaboration patterns have evolved in the field of social media usage and mental well-being. The color gradient, ranging from dark blue (earlier contributions) to yellow (more recent work), highlights a clear shift in research activity across institutions over time.

At the center of the network, *South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust* continues to play a pivotal role, maintaining consistent collaboration across different time periods. Its position, along with its connections to *Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust* and *The Alan Turing Institute*, suggests that it has been actively involved in both earlier and more recent research, acting as a stable anchor in the evolving collaboration landscape.

On the left side of the network, institutions such as departments focusing on child and adolescent studies appear in lighter yellow shades, indicating that research in this area has gained more attention in recent years. This points to a growing scholarly interest in understanding how social media affects younger populations, particularly in relation to mental health outcomes.

Similarly, institutions like *The Alan Turing Institute* show relatively recent activity, reflecting the increasing integration of data science and computational approaches into mental well-being research. This shift suggests that newer collaborations are becoming more interdisciplinary, combining expertise from psychology, healthcare, and artificial intelligence.

Figure 7



Figure 7 Overlay Visualization of Organizations

Source: Author's Analysis

CO-AUTHORSHIP ANALYSIS – COUNTRY LEVEL

The country-level co-authorship analysis highlights a broad and increasingly interconnected global research landscape in the field of social media usage and mental well-being. A total of 104 countries contributed to the literature, out of which 86 countries form the largest connected collaboration network. This indicates that while participation is geographically widespread, a small proportion of countries still remain relatively isolated from the main collaborative structure.

Among all contributing nations, the United States clearly emerges as the most dominant and influential player. Its large node size and central position in the network reflect both high research productivity and strong international collaboration. The United States appears to act as a global hub, maintaining extensive research linkages with countries across different regions, thereby facilitating knowledge exchange at an international level.

In addition to the United States, countries such as the United Kingdom, China, and India also stand out as major contributors. The United Kingdom occupies a strategically important position, connecting multiple clusters and playing a key role in bridging European and global research collaborations. Similarly, China shows a strong and growing presence, with dense connections to both Asian and Western countries, indicating its increasing influence in this research domain. India also emerges as a significant contributor, with active collaborations spanning across Asia, Europe, and beyond, highlighting its role as an important link within the global research network.

The network further reveals the presence of several regional collaboration clusters. European countries such as Germany, Spain, France, and the Netherlands appear closely interconnected, suggesting a well-established regional research network. At the same time, Asian countries including Malaysia, Pakistan, South Korea, and the Philippines form another cluster, reflecting shared research interests and regional proximity. These patterns indicate that geographical and cultural factors continue to influence international collaboration.

Interestingly, countries like Malaysia and the Netherlands appear as intermediary nodes, connecting different clusters and facilitating cross-regional collaboration. Smaller contributors such as Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, and Cameroon, although having limited output, are still integrated into the network, demonstrating the expanding global interest in this area.

Figure 8

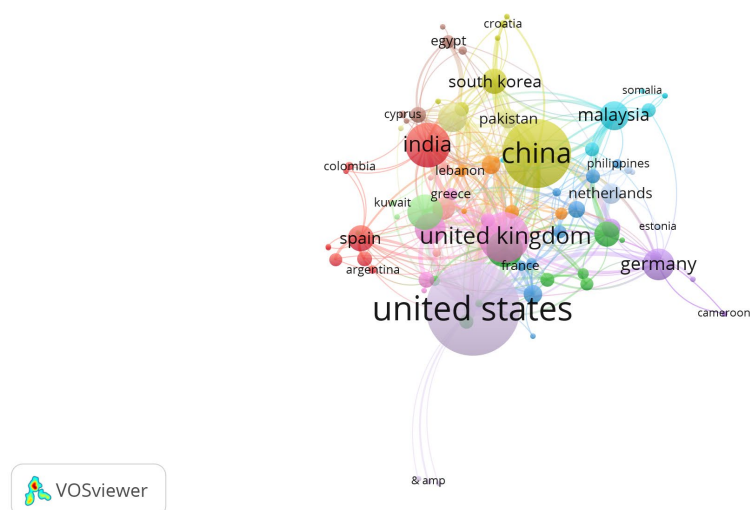


Figure 8 Network Visualization of Countries

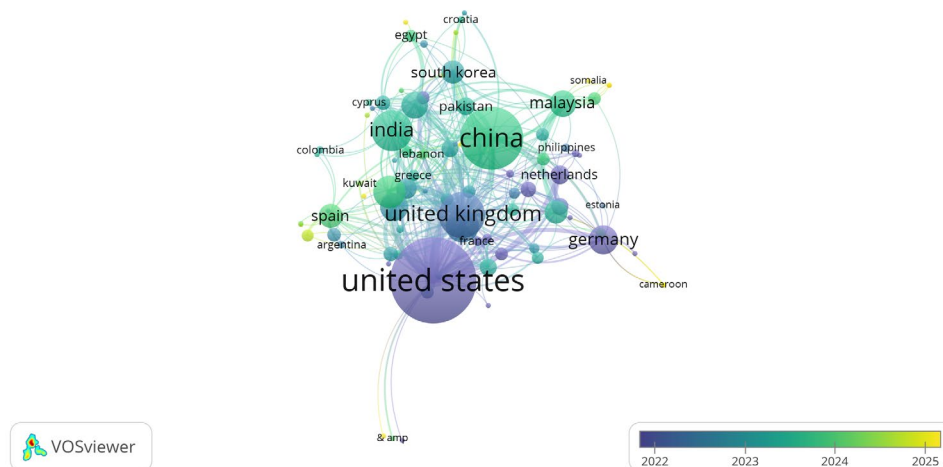
Source: Author's Analysis

The overlay visualization also helps identify the early contributors and the more recent contributors in the research field through the color variation shown in the network. Countries represented in darker blue and purple shades indicate earlier research contributions, whereas green and yellow shades represent countries with more recent publication activity.

The United States appears as one of the earliest and most influential contributors in the field. Its dark blue color and large node size indicate that it played a foundational role in developing the research area and continues to maintain strong collaborations worldwide. Germany and the United Kingdom also belong to the earlier group of contributors, reflecting their long-standing involvement in international research collaborations.

On the other hand, countries such as Malaysia, Egypt, Pakistan, and some smaller emerging nations are shown in lighter green and yellow shades, suggesting that their research contributions have increased more recently. China and India, although already major contributors, also display relatively newer shades compared to the United States, indicating rapid growth and increasing influence in recent years.

An important insight from the map is the visible shift of research activity toward Asian countries. While Western nations initially dominated the field, recent trends show that countries like China, India, Malaysia, and South Korea are becoming increasingly active and collaborative. This suggests a gradual expansion of the research landscape from traditionally dominant countries to emerging economies with growing academic interest and international partnerships.

Figure 9**Figure 9 Overlay Visualization of Countries****Source: Author's Analysis**

Based on the identified gaps and emerging trends, the following future research agenda can be developed for the field of social media usage and mental well-being.

The findings of the bibliometric analysis indicate that research on social media usage and mental well-being has expanded rapidly over the past decade. However, despite this growth, several important areas still require deeper academic attention. Future research should therefore move beyond descriptive studies and focus on developing stronger theoretical, methodological, and contextual understanding of the relationship between social media and mental health.

From a theoretical perspective, future studies should attempt to integrate concepts from psychology, communication studies, behavioral sciences, and information technology to build more comprehensive frameworks. Existing research has largely examined social media and mental well-being in isolation, often focusing only on anxiety, stress, or depression. There is a need to explore how multiple psychological and social factors interact simultaneously in digital environments. Developing interdisciplinary theoretical models may provide a more holistic understanding of user behavior and mental health outcomes.

In terms of context, the current literature is still heavily dominated by contributions from developed countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom. Although countries like China, India, and Malaysia have recently shown increasing research activity, many developing regions remain underrepresented. Future studies should therefore focus on cross-cultural and comparative research to understand how social media influences mental well-being across different societies, cultures, and economic settings. Such studies may reveal important differences in digital behavior, coping mechanisms, and psychological responses.

Another important direction relates to user characteristics and platform-specific behavior. Most existing studies have concentrated on general social media usage without differentiating between platforms or user groups. Future researchers should examine how different platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and YouTube uniquely affect mental well-being. Similarly, factors such as age, gender, personality traits, emotional resilience, and digital literacy should be explored in greater detail to understand why individuals respond differently to social media exposure.

Methodologically, the field would benefit from more longitudinal and mixed-method research designs. A large proportion of the existing literature is based on cross-sectional survey methods, which provide limited understanding of long-term psychological effects. Future research should adopt longitudinal approaches to examine how continuous social media exposure shapes mental well-being over time. Experimental studies, qualitative interviews, and AI-driven sentiment analysis may also provide richer insights into online behavior and emotional experiences.

The analysis further suggests the need to broaden the scope of antecedents examined in the literature. While excessive usage, addiction, cyberbullying, and fear of missing out have been widely studied, less attention has been paid to external influences such as family environment, workplace stress, economic conditions, and algorithm-driven content exposure. Future studies should investigate how these broader social and technological factors contribute to mental health outcomes in digital environments.

Finally, future research should not focus solely on the negative effects of social media. Positive dimensions such as emotional support, online communities, mental health awareness campaigns, and digital well-being initiatives also deserve greater scholarly

attention. Researchers may further explore how artificial intelligence, digital interventions, and platform regulations can be used to promote healthier online engagement and improve overall mental well-being.

FUTURE RESEARCH AGENDA

Table 2

Table 2 Proposed Future Research Direction			
Dimension	What Has Been Done	Identified Gaps	Future Research Directions
T – Theory	Existing studies have mainly focused on understanding the relationship between social media usage and mental well-being through concepts such as anxiety, depression, stress, addiction, and psychological well-being. Many studies have adopted theories related to media usage, behavioral psychology, and digital communication.	Theoretical development in this field remains fragmented, and many studies are descriptive in nature. Limited integration of interdisciplinary theories combining psychology, communication, technology, and behavioral sciences has been observed.	Future studies should develop integrated theoretical frameworks combining psychological, technological, and social perspectives. More theory-driven research is needed to explain causal relationships between social media behavior and mental health outcomes across different demographic groups.
C – Context	Research has largely concentrated on developed countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and other European nations. Recently, Asian countries like China, India, and Malaysia have shown increasing research contributions.	Developing nations and culturally diverse regions remain underexplored. Most studies focus on university students and young adults, while other social groups receive limited attention.	Future research should examine the impact of social media usage in diverse cultural and socioeconomic settings. Comparative cross-country studies and research involving older adults, working professionals, adolescents, and vulnerable communities would provide broader insights.
C – Characteristics	Studies have mainly explored variables such as social media addiction, stress, anxiety, depression, emotional well-being, and usage behavior across platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok.	Limited attention has been given to platform-specific behavioral characteristics, positive psychological outcomes, and long-term mental health effects. Differences based on gender, personality traits, and usage patterns are also insufficiently examined.	Future studies should investigate platform-specific effects, user personality traits, emotional resilience, and positive well-being outcomes. Longitudinal studies examining long-term psychological impacts of social media engagement are also recommended.
M – Methodology	Most existing studies rely heavily on quantitative survey-based methods and cross-sectional research designs. Bibliometric and co-authorship analyses have also become increasingly common.	There is limited use of longitudinal, experimental, and mixed-method approaches. Collaboration networks remain fragmented, and qualitative insights are comparatively scarce.	Future research should adopt mixed-method, longitudinal, and experimental designs to capture deeper behavioral and psychological changes over time. Greater interdisciplinary collaboration and the use of AI-driven analytics, sentiment analysis, and big data approaches may strengthen future findings.
Antecedents	Previous studies have identified excessive social media use, digital addiction, cyberbullying, fear of missing out (FOMO), and online social comparison as major antecedents influencing mental well-being.	Research has not sufficiently explored organizational, environmental, family, and societal factors influencing mental health through social media usage.	Future studies should examine broader antecedents such as workplace digital culture, family environment, social isolation, economic stress, and algorithmic exposure patterns in shaping mental well-being.

Research Themes	Major research themes include social media addiction, anxiety, depression, stress, psychological well-being, digital behavior, and online interaction patterns. Recent studies also focus on pandemic-related mental health issues.	Positive dimensions of social media usage, such as emotional support, online communities, digital learning, and mental health awareness, remain relatively underexplored.	Future research should explore positive and balanced perspectives of social media usage, including social connectedness, emotional support systems, online therapy communities, and the role of AI-driven interventions for improving mental well-being.
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Source: Author’s analysis

IMPLICATIONS
THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The present study makes several important theoretical contributions to the existing literature on social media usage and mental well-being. First, the study provides a comprehensive overview of the intellectual structure and evolution of this research domain through bibliometric analysis. By systematically mapping publication trends, co-authorship networks, institutional collaborations, and country-level contributions, the study helps in understanding how the field has developed over time and how scholarly interest has expanded globally.

The findings also highlight the interdisciplinary nature of the field, as research contributions originate from psychology, social sciences, computer science, healthcare, business, and communication studies. This indicates that the relationship between social media usage and mental well-being cannot be fully understood from a single disciplinary perspective. The study therefore supports the need for integrating multiple theoretical approaches to explain the complex interaction between digital behavior and psychological outcomes.

Another important theoretical implication is the identification of emerging research themes and collaboration patterns. The analysis reveals that earlier studies primarily focused on issues such as stress, anxiety, depression, and social media addiction, whereas recent studies increasingly explore broader aspects of emotional well-being, online behavior, and digital engagement. This shift reflects the gradual maturation of the field and provides a foundation for future theory-building efforts.

The study further contributes by identifying significant research gaps related to context, methodology, and user characteristics. The dominance of developed countries in the literature suggests the need for more culturally diverse and comparative studies. Similarly, the limited use of longitudinal and mixed-method approaches indicates opportunities for future researchers to strengthen theoretical understanding through more robust research designs.

Overall, the study enriches the academic literature by offering a structured understanding of the evolution, collaboration dynamics, and thematic development of research on social media usage and mental well-being.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study also carry several practical and managerial implications for policymakers, healthcare professionals, educational institutions, social media companies, and mental health practitioners.

For social media platform developers and technology companies, the study highlights the growing concerns surrounding excessive social media usage and its association with anxiety, stress, and depression. These findings suggest the need for platforms to adopt more responsible digital practices by introducing features that encourage healthy online behavior, screen-time monitoring, content moderation, and digital well-being tools. Companies may also use artificial intelligence and algorithmic interventions to reduce harmful content exposure and promote positive user experiences.

Educational institutions can benefit from the findings by developing awareness programs related to responsible social media usage and mental health management. Since a large portion of existing studies focuses on adolescents and young adults, schools and universities should design counseling initiatives, digital literacy programs, and workshops that help students manage online stress, cyberbullying, and digital addiction more effectively.

Healthcare professionals and mental health practitioners may use the insights from this study to better understand the psychological impact of social media engagement. The increasing research attention in this field indicates that social media behavior has become an important factor influencing mental well-being. Practitioners can therefore incorporate digital behavior assessment into mental health evaluation and intervention strategies.

The study also provides implications for policymakers and regulatory authorities. As social media increasingly influences emotional and psychological well-being, there is a growing need for policies that ensure safer digital environments, data privacy protection, and ethical platform governance. Policymakers may further encourage collaborations between mental health experts, researchers, and technology companies to create evidence-based digital well-being frameworks.

Finally, the study offers useful insights for researchers and academic institutions by identifying major contributors, collaboration patterns, and emerging research areas. Understanding these trends can help institutions develop stronger interdisciplinary partnerships and encourage international collaboration in future research related to digital behavior and mental health.

CONCLUSION

The present study provides a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of research on social media usage and mental well-being by examining publication trends, collaboration patterns among authors, institutional contributions, and international research networks. Using data retrieved from the Scopus database and analyzed through bibliometric techniques, the study offers a structured understanding of how this research field has evolved over time.

The findings reveal that research on social media usage and mental well-being has experienced substantial growth over the last decade. In the initial years, the number of publications remained limited, indicating that the topic was still at an exploratory stage. However, from 2015 onwards, scholarly interest increased steadily, followed by a sharp rise after 2018. The rapid increase in publications during and after the COVID-19 pandemic reflects growing global concern regarding the psychological effects of social media usage, including stress, anxiety, depression, and digital addiction. The consistent rise in recent years further confirms that this area has now become an important and well-established research domain.

The co-authorship analysis demonstrates that although a large number of researchers are contributing to the field, collaboration patterns remain relatively fragmented. The network consists of multiple clusters representing independent research communities with limited interconnection. Among all authors, Mark D. Griffiths emerges as one of the most influential contributors due to his strong collaborative presence and central position within the network. The overlay visualization further indicates a gradual evolution from smaller and isolated research groups toward more collaborative and interdisciplinary research practices in recent years.

The organizational co-authorship analysis highlights the important role played by institutions such as South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust, and The Alan Turing Institute. These institutions occupy central positions within the collaboration network and contribute significantly to interdisciplinary research involving psychology, healthcare, and digital technologies. The analysis also shows that institutional collaborations are often formed around shared research interests, particularly in areas related to adolescent mental health, behavioral studies, and computational analysis. Recent trends further indicate increasing integration of data science and artificial intelligence into mental well-being research.

The country-level analysis reveals that the United States is the leading contributor in the field, both in terms of research productivity and international collaboration. The United Kingdom, China, and India also emerge as major contributors with strong global linkages. European countries demonstrate well-established collaborative networks, while Asian countries show rapidly increasing research activity in recent years. The overlay visualization further highlights that earlier research contributions were dominated by Western nations, whereas recent growth is increasingly driven by Asian and emerging economies. This shift indicates the expanding global relevance of the topic and the growing diversity of international research participation.

The study concludes that research on social media usage and mental well-being has evolved into a dynamic and interdisciplinary field with growing academic and societal significance. While considerable progress has been made in understanding the psychological implications of social media usage, important gaps still remain in terms of theory development, contextual diversity, methodological approaches, and cross-disciplinary collaboration. The findings of this study not only contribute to the existing literature but also provide a roadmap for future research, policymaking, and practical interventions aimed at promoting healthier digital environments and improving mental well-being in the modern digital age.

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