Shevchenko Anastasiia
Higher Education Applicant, Ukraine

Kozub Svitlana
PhD (Technical Sciences), Associate Professor
Kharkiv National Medical University, Ukraine

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL NETWORKS ON MENTAL HEALTH

Relevance of the topic. Over the past decade, significant changes have occurred in society regarding the use of social networks. Previously, mobile phones were primarily used for communication, but now this has changed: new possibilities for using gadgets have emerged. One such opportunity is social media, which has allowed people to communicate with each other instantly. This has had a positive impact on the accessibility of communication, especially for individuals who were previously unable to stay in touch, such as those living in different countries. This demonstrates that the use of social media has brought people closer together. However, from my own experience as a member of society living in the modern digital world, I observe that social networks have a negative impact on the mental health of each of us and distance us more than we think.

The aim of this work is to identify the negative effects of social networks on mental health.

Key points. Studies indicate that approximately 5.6 billion people worldwide regularly utilize digital networks. Not a single day goes by without modern teenagers and adults using the internet, a tool for communicating with others, particularly through social communities like Instagram. It allows users to share photos and videos and features include ‘stories,’ which are updated daily, and ‘live streaming,’ which enables users to broadcast at any time. The positive impact of such internet use is that people feel close to their loved ones or even strangers who may be thousands of miles away from them. However, this has several harmful consequences. On the street or in public transport, almost every third passer-by uses a mobile device. This prevents people from being in the ‘now’, from concentrating on something not far away, not in someone else's life, but in their own ‘here’.

When we scroll through someone's social media post while walking, we miss out on different possible experiences in our own lives. We deprive ourselves of the chance to meet someone new on the underground or admire the cute pets of passers-by, the singing of birds or the clouds in the sky. Active use of the internet contributes

to the illusion that there is a second reality inside our screens. However, this is not true, because they are only parts of our days, only moments, but not our whole life. It should be noted that, from a scientific point of view, the blue light of gadgets is a great stimulation for our brain and nervous system. This means that the human body becomes tense when using them and requires rest when they are not in use. Also, after spending a long time doing activities that require high stimulation, we have more and more thoughts that can be disturbing and intrusive, causing us discomfort. For example, low stimulation activities include: walks in the fresh air, any activities that involve tactile sensations (drawing, modelling with clay or air plasticine, ceramics, handicrafts), touching pleasant textures (animal fur, blankets, hair), singing, writing on paper, reading paper books, playing musical instruments, and board games. In order not to harm our mental health, we need to find a balance, filling our days not only with activities that require high stimulation, but also with those that require low stimulation.

Conclusions. Modern members of society need to be more mindful of how they spend their free time and remember that mobile devices cannot replace the activities that children typically engage in, but which are actually essential for adults. Life in the modern world has given people many opportunities, but it has also made it clear that if we do not learn to find balance and rest effectively for our own bodies, we will easily harm ourselves without even noticing it.

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