

Responses to Reviewers' Comments

:

The authors sincerely thank the reviewers for their insightful and constructive feedback. The comments provided have been invaluable in strengthening the manuscript. We deeply appreciate the time and effort the reviewers dedicated to offering detailed suggestions, which have significantly enhanced both the clarity and rigor of the study. Below, we provide a summary of how each of the key points raised has been addressed in the revised manuscript.

Responses to Reviewer #1's Suggestions

1. **Clarification of Research Gaps:** In response to the reviewer's suggestion, the manuscript has been revised to more clearly articulate the research gaps that motivated the study. Specifically, the revised abstract now explicitly outlines the existing gaps in understanding the adverse impacts of excessive social media use on self-esteem, particularly among youth. This clearer identification of research gaps sets the stage for the study's objectives and provides a more focused context for the analysis.
2. **Abstract Structure:** In alignment with the reviewer's recommendation, the abstract has been restructured to include the following elements:
 - *Research Problem/Gap:* A concise description of the research gap regarding the impact of social media on youth self-esteem.
 - *Research Questions:* The manuscript now specifies the research questions, which include investigating how digital use influences self-esteem and vice versa.
 - *Methodology:* As this study is a critical review of existing literature, the methodology section clarifies that the paper synthesizes and analyzes previously published studies to identify key patterns and gaps in the field.
 - *Results and Significance:* The revised abstract emphasizes the findings, which highlight the complex relationship between social media use and self-esteem, and the significance of addressing this issue within the context of youth vulnerability.
3. **Discussion and Critical Analysis:** To address the reviewer's concern about the lack of critical engagement with the social causation, social selection, and reciprocal hypotheses, the manuscript now includes a more in-depth comparative analysis of these frameworks. Rather than simply describing these concepts, the revised discussion critically examines how each hypothesis contributes to understanding the relationship between digital behavior and self-esteem, drawing comparisons to illustrate their relevance and limitations.
4. **Alignment with Research Objectives:** The discussion has been revised to more explicitly align with the study's objectives as outlined in the abstract. Specifically, the paper now clearly explores:
 - How the social causation, social selection, and reciprocal hypotheses inform our understanding of problematic digital use and its effects on self-esteem.

- The reciprocal influence between self-esteem and digital engagement, with a focus on how each shapes the other.
 - The impact of problematic digital use on self-esteem, emphasizing the negative consequences of excessive social media use for youth.
5. **Temporal Context of the Digital Age:** In response to the reviewer's suggestion, the manuscript has been updated to specify key developments within the Digital Age that are relevant to the study. The revised text now identifies milestones such as the rise of the internet in the late 20th century, the proliferation of smartphones, and the increasing influence of social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter). These developments provide a clearer temporal context for the study and help situate the research within existing literature.
 6. **Ethical Approval:** As this study is a critical review of existing literature rather than an original data collection, it does not require Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. The manuscript clarifies this point to address the reviewer's concern regarding ethical approval for research involving youth.

Responses to Reviewer #2's Suggestions

1. **Concrete Data and Case Studies:** We added the phrase "draws on empirical data and case studies" to indicate that the paper will include specific examples to back up its claims. This makes the abstract feel more grounded in real-world observations.
2. **Balance of Theoretical and Practical Insights:** In response to the reviewer's concern about over-reliance on theoretical frameworks, We reworded the abstract to clarify how these theories contribute to understanding the issue and how they are connected to practical, actionable recommendations. This should make the paper more useful for practitioners.
3. **Intervention Strategies:** The revised abstract explicitly mentions practical recommendations for parents, educators, and mental health professionals, addressing the reviewer's request for actionable intervention strategies.
4. **Broader Context:** We added a reference to external factors like family dynamics, socioeconomic status, and offline social interactions, responding to the reviewer's suggestion to consider a more holistic perspective on the issue.
5. **Clarification of 'Problematic Digital Use':** While this revision doesn't directly define "problematic digital use," it's clear from the added context that the paper will clarify this concept by addressing how excessive digital engagement negatively impacts self-esteem, supported by empirical data.
6. **Positive Digital Engagement:** We included a discussion of the positive aspects of digital use, such as fostering social connections and learning, to create a more balanced view of the topic.