The dual impact of social media on intrapersonal skills in medical students: A thematic review of recent literature

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Social media has become a central part of daily life, particularly among medical undergraduates who frequently use platforms like Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Twitter for communication, learning, and networking. While these platforms offer opportunities for academic and personal development, concerns have emerged regarding their influence on intrapersonal skills, such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, and creativity. This study aims to explore the relationship between social media usage and the development of intrapersonal skills in medical students. **Materials and Methods:** A literature review methodology was employed by drawing upon databases like PubMed and Google Scholar. The inclusion criteria focused on peer-reviewed, full-text articles published in English within the last ten years. From an initial pool of 17,800 entries, 24 relevant articles were selected. Thematic analysis was conducted through four steps: exploration of constructs, peer review, categorization of data, and conceptualization of a theoretical model. **Results:** Three key constructs were identified: (1) trends in social media usage, (2) frequency of use among medical undergraduates, and (3) the impact of social media on intrapersonal skills. Most medical students spend between 2 to 10+ hours daily on social media, with Facebook being the most preferred platform. Usage patterns vary by region and purpose, including personal communication, academic enrichment, and professional networking. These usage patterns have shown a complex relationship with intrapersonal skill development. On one hand, social media can enhance creativity, academic performance, internal motivation, and a sense of belonging. It also facilitates self-reflection and supports the development of communication skills, which are essential in medical education and practice. On the other hand, excessive use is associated with negative outcomes, such as internet and smartphone addiction, increased anxiety and depression, and exposure to misinformation. These adverse effects can hinder emotional regulation and impair decision-making abilities, both of which are critical for future healthcare professionals. Thus, the influence of social media on intrapersonal skills is multifaceted and shaped by how and how much it is used. **Conclusion:** Medical undergraduates spend significant time on social media, which has both positive and negative impacts on their intrapersonal development. While it fosters creativity, communication, and learning, overuse can lead to addiction, mental health challenges, and misinformation. This study highlights the importance of mindful social media engagement and recommends future research to use quantitative or qualitative methods to deepen the understanding of this relationship. However, this study is limited by its reliance on existing literature. Future research should incorporate empirical methods to validate and expand the findings. Medical undergraduates are encouraged to critically evaluate their social media usage, select platforms wisely, and remain aware of how their engagement may influence their personal and professional growth.

Keywords: Social media usage, intrapersonal skills, medical undergraduates, literature review