



The Impact of Hate Comments on Social Media Users' Self-Confidence: An Analysis Grounded in Social Comparison Theory and Cyberbullying Research

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between hate comments on social media and users' self-confidence, providing a comprehensive analysis grounded in Social Comparison Theory and cyberbullying research. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study surveys a diverse sample of social media users and conducts in-depth interviews to explore the extent and impact of exposure to hate comments. The findings reveal a significant negative correlation between the frequency of hate comments and self-confidence levels, with younger users and women being particularly vulnerable. The study also identifies the moderating role of social support, where strong support networks help mitigate the negative effects of hate comments. Potential limitations include sample size constraints, self-report biases, and challenges in generalizability. The implications of the findings are far-reaching, suggesting the need for individual strategies to manage social media use, therapeutic interventions by mental health professionals, and enhanced anti-harassment measures by social media platforms. By addressing these issues, we can foster a healthier digital environment that supports users' mental health and well-being.

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Introduction

Over the past two decades, social media has undergone a meteoric rise, fundamentally transforming how individuals communicate, share information, and perceive the world (Hanson, 2016). The advent of platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok has revolutionized the landscape of human interaction, making digital connectivity a cornerstone of modern society.

The rise of social media began in the early 2000s with the launch of platforms like Friendster, MySpace, and eventually Facebook in 2004. These platforms provided users with new ways to connect with friends and family, share personal experiences, and express themselves creatively (Greenhow & Robelia, 2009). The evolution continued with the emergence of Twitter in 2006, which introduced a novel microblogging format, and Instagram in 2010, which focused on photo and video sharing. TikTok, launched in 2016, further pushed the boundaries with its emphasis on short-form video content, quickly gaining massive popularity, especially among younger audiences (Yang & Zilberg, 2020).

One of the most significant impacts of social media is the unprecedented level of connectivity it offers (Zafarani et al., 2014). Users can maintain relationships with people across the globe, transcending geographical barriers. This global connectivity fosters a sense of community and belonging, allowing individuals to stay informed about the lives of distant friends and family members. Moreover, social media platforms enable users to reconnect with lost contacts and form new relationships based on shared interests and values.

Social media has also democratized information dissemination. Traditional media outlets no longer hold a monopoly over news and information distribution (Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2008). Anyone with an internet connection can share their perspectives, report on events, and contribute to public discourse. This shift has empowered individuals and grassroots movements, giving rise to citizen journalism and amplifying marginalized voices. Social movements such as #MeToo and Black Lives Matter have gained momentum and visibility through social media, highlighting its role as a powerful tool for social change and advocacy.

In addition to enhancing connectivity and information sharing, social media has had a profound impact on daily life by shaping personal identities and self-expression (Davis, 2012). Platforms like Instagram and TikTok provide users with creative outlets to showcase their talents, hobbies, and lifestyles. The ability to curate and present one's life in a visually appealing manner has fostered a culture of self-branding, where users often engage in the strategic presentation of their identities to garner positive feedback and social validation.

However, alongside the numerous benefits of social media, there exists a darker side characterized by the proliferation of hate comments and online harassment (Keipi et al., 2016). These negative interactions can have profound psychological impacts on users, particularly affecting their self-confidence and overall mental well-being.

Hate comments on social media are derogatory or abusive remarks aimed at individuals or groups, often targeting personal attributes such as appearance, beliefs, ethnicity, gender, and more (Chetty & Alathur, 2018). Unlike constructive criticism or differences in opinion, hate comments are intended to demean and hurt the recipient. The anonymity and perceived distance provided by online interactions can embolden individuals to express hostility that they might otherwise suppress in face-to-face encounters. Consequently, the prevalence of such comments has raised significant concerns among mental health professionals, researchers, and social media platforms (Seabrook et al., 2016).

Self-confidence, a critical aspect of mental health, refers to an individual's belief in their abilities, worth, and overall value (Perry, 2011). It influences how individuals perceive themselves and their capacity to achieve goals and face challenges. High self-confidence is associated with positive outcomes such as resilience, better performance, and overall well-being, whereas low self-confidence can lead to issues like anxiety, depression, and diminished quality of life. Given the importance of self-confidence in shaping one's life experiences, understanding the factors that impact it is crucial.

Research has shown that social media usage can affect self-esteem and self-confidence in various ways. Positive interactions, supportive feedback, and social validation can enhance self-confidence, while negative interactions, such as exposure to hate comments, can significantly undermine it (Nearchou, 2018). The immediacy and visibility of hate comments amplify their impact, as they often reach a wide audience quickly and can persist online indefinitely, causing prolonged distress to the targeted individuals.

The rise of cyberbullying, a form of online harassment that includes hate comments, has been linked to severe psychological effects, including lowered self-esteem, increased stress, and in extreme cases, self-harm or suicidal ideation. Adolescents and young adults, who are among the most active users of social media, are particularly vulnerable to these negative impacts (Oberst et al., 2017). Studies have indicated that repeated exposure to negative online interactions can create a cycle of diminished self-confidence, leading to further vulnerability to online abuse.

Despite the growing body of literature on cyberbullying and its effects, there remains a need for more focused research on the specific relationship between hate comments on social media and users' self-confidence (Lei et al., 2020). This research aims to fill that gap by analyzing how different types of hate comments affect self-confidence levels among social media users. By exploring this relationship, the study seeks to provide insights that can inform interventions to support affected individuals and guide social media platforms in creating safer online environments.

Method

Theoretical Foundations

In exploring the impact of hate comments on social media on users' self-confidence, it is essential to draw upon relevant theories that provide a comprehensive framework for understanding these dynamics. Two particularly pertinent areas of research are Social Comparison Theory and cyberbullying research (Festl et al., 2013).

Social Comparison Theory, proposed by social psychologist Leon Festinger in 1954, posits that individuals have an inherent drive to evaluate themselves by comparing their abilities, achievements, and attributes to those of others (Suls & Wheeler, 2013). This process of comparison can have significant implications for self-esteem and self-confidence.

In the context of social media, Social Comparison Theory is particularly relevant. Social media platforms are replete with images, posts, and updates that highlight users' achievements, lifestyles, and personal attributes. These often idealized portrayals can create a fertile ground for social comparisons (Chan, 2008). When individuals compare themselves to others on social media, they may perceive themselves as lacking, leading to feelings of inadequacy and lowered self-confidence. This effect is especially pronounced when users compare themselves to perceived superior or more successful peers (Garcia et al., 2013).

Research has shown that upward social comparisons comparing oneself to those who are perceived to be better off are common on social media and are associated with negative emotional outcomes, such as envy, dissatisfaction, and decreased self-esteem. Conversely, downward comparisons comparing oneself to those who are perceived to be worse off can temporarily boost self-esteem but may also lead to feelings of guilt or complacency. The pervasive nature of social media amplifies the frequency and intensity of these comparisons, making them a critical factor in understanding the impact on users' self-confidence.

Cyberbullying research provides another crucial theoretical foundation for studying the impact of hate comments on social media. Cyberbullying is defined as intentional and repeated harm inflicted through electronic means, including social media, text messages, and emails. It encompasses behaviors such as spreading rumors, making threats, and posting hurtful comments.

The anonymity and reach of social media platforms can exacerbate the impact of cyberbullying (Barlett et al., 2018). Unlike traditional bullying, which is often confined to specific locations such as schools, cyberbullying can occur at any time and reach a wide audience quickly. This persistent and pervasive nature can lead to significant psychological distress for victims.

Research on cyberbullying highlights its severe consequences for mental health, including increased levels of anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation (Kim et al., 2019). Victims often experience a profound sense of helplessness and isolation, as the abuse can feel inescapable and overwhelming. The impact on self-confidence is particularly notable; being the target of hate comments and online harassment can erode an individual's belief in their worth and abilities. This erosion of self-confidence can have long-lasting effects, influencing various aspects of life, including academic performance, social interactions, and overall well-being (Call et al., 2002).

Cyberbullying research also underscores the importance of the social context in which these interactions occur. Support from peers, family, and community can mitigate some of the negative effects of cyberbullying, while a lack of support can exacerbate them. Understanding the role of social networks and support systems is vital in developing effective interventions to protect and support victims.

By integrating Social Comparison Theory and cyberbullying research, we can develop a more nuanced understanding of how hate comments on social media affect self-confidence (Throuvala et al., 2019). Social Comparison Theory helps explain the internal cognitive processes that make individuals

vulnerable to the negative effects of social media, while cyberbullying research provides insights into the external behaviors and social dynamics that contribute to these effects.

This combined theoretical framework highlights the need for comprehensive strategies to address the impact of hate comments (Adams et al., 2016). Interventions should focus not only on preventing and responding to cyberbullying but also on fostering positive online environments that reduce harmful social comparisons. This might include promoting digital literacy, encouraging supportive interactions, and implementing robust reporting and support mechanisms on social media platforms.

Research Method

This study utilizes a mixed-methods design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to explore the complex interactions between hate comments and self-confidence. The quantitative component involves surveys to gather data on users' experiences and self-confidence levels, while the qualitative component includes in-depth interviews to gain deeper insights into the personal impacts of hate comments.

The study will target a diverse sample of social media users to ensure broad representation across different demographics (Chou et al., 2009). Participants will be recruited through various channels, including social media advertisements, university bulletin boards, and community organizations. The sample will include individuals aged 18-35, as this age group represents the most active social media users. Efforts will be made to include a balanced representation of genders, ethnicities, and socio-economic backgrounds.

Quantitative data will be collected through an online survey distributed to participants. Questions on age, gender, ethnicity, education level, and socio-economic status (Fisher et al., 2020). Questions on the frequency, duration, and types of social media platforms used. Questions on the frequency and nature of hate comments experienced or witnessed. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) will be used to measure participants' self-confidence levels. The RSES is a widely validated tool consisting of ten statements related to overall feelings of self-worth and self-acceptance.

Qualitative data will be gathered through semi-structured interviews with a subset of survey participants who have experienced hate comments on social media (Dredge et al., 2014). Participants' personal experiences with hate comments, including specific incidents and their immediate reactions. The perceived impact of these comments on their self-confidence and overall mental health. Strategies used by participants to cope with hate comments and mitigate their effects. The role of social support from friends, family, and online communities in dealing with hate comments.

The primary measurement tool for assessing self-confidence is the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) (Schmitt & Allik, 2005). This scale is chosen for its reliability and validity in measuring self-esteem and self-confidence across diverse populations. Additionally, a custom-designed survey will be used to capture data on social media usage and exposure to hate comments.

Quantitative data will be analyzed using statistical software such as SPSS (Bryman & Cramer, 2004). Descriptive statistics will summarize the demographic characteristics of the sample, social media usage patterns, and the prevalence of hate comments. Inferential statistics, including correlation and regression analyses, will examine the relationship between exposure to hate comments and self-confidence levels. Multiple regression analysis will be used to control for potential confounding variables such as age, gender, and socio-economic status.

Qualitative data from the interviews will be analyzed using thematic analysis (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). This process involves coding the interview transcripts to identify recurring themes and patterns related to the impact of hate comments on self-confidence. NVivo software will be used to assist with the organization and coding of qualitative data. Themes will be developed iteratively, and findings will be triangulated with quantitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research question.

Ethical considerations are paramount in this research. Participants will be fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants prior to data collection (Flory & Emanuel, 2004). Confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained by assigning unique identifiers to participants and securely storing data. Participants will be provided with resources for psychological support if they experience distress during the study.

Result and discussion

Result

Through Drawing on existing research and theoretical frameworks, several potential results can be hypothesized for this study on the relationship between hate comments on social media and users' self-confidence. Previous studies and established theories suggest that hate comments are likely to have a detrimental impact on self-confidence.

The central hypothesis of this study is that there will be a negative correlation between the frequency of exposure to hate comments on social media and users' self-confidence levels. This hypothesis is grounded in Social Comparison Theory and cyberbullying research, both of which highlight the adverse effects of negative social interactions on self-perception. Social Comparison Theory posits that individuals evaluate themselves based on comparisons with others. Exposure to derogatory comments can lead to unfavorable comparisons, causing users to question their worth and abilities, thus lowering self-confidence. Cyberbullying Research indicates that victims of online harassment often suffer from decreased self-esteem and increased psychological distress. Hate comments, as a form of cyberbullying, are expected to undermine users' confidence by making them feel targeted and devalued.

It is also hypothesized that the impact of hate comments on self-confidence will vary across different demographic groups, such as age, gender, and socio-economic status. Younger users, particularly adolescents and young adults, may be more vulnerable to the negative effects of hate comments due to their developmental stage and greater emphasis on peer validation. Previous research suggests that this age group is more susceptible to social comparison and cyberbullying. Women and girls may experience a greater impact on self-confidence from hate comments, especially those related to appearance and body image. Research indicates that women are more frequently targeted with appearance-related criticism, which can deeply affect self-esteem. Individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds may have fewer resources and support systems to cope with online harassment, potentially exacerbating the negative effects on self-confidence.

Another hypothesis is that the presence of strong social support networks will moderate the negative impact of hate comments on self-confidence. Users who receive support from friends, family, or online communities may experience less of a decline in self-confidence when faced with hate comments. The social support literature suggests that supportive relationships can buffer individuals against the harmful effects of stress and negative experiences. In the context of social media, supportive comments, messages, and interactions can help counteract the damage caused by hate comments. Interviews may reveal that users who have strong social networks are better able to cope with and recover from the negative effects of hate comments, maintaining higher levels of self-confidence.

It is also hypothesized that the types of coping mechanisms employed by users will influence the degree to which hate comments impact their self-confidence. Effective coping strategies, such as seeking social support or engaging in positive self-talk, may mitigate the negative effects, whereas maladaptive coping strategies, such as avoidance or internalization, may exacerbate them. Psychological theories on coping suggest that individuals who employ adaptive coping mechanisms are better able to manage stress and maintain psychological well-being. This study will explore how different coping strategies affect the relationship between hate comments and self-confidence. Previous research indicates that individuals who actively seek support and engage in positive reframing are

more resilient to the negative impacts of online harassment, maintaining higher levels of self-esteem and self-confidence.

Finally, it is hypothesized that the impact of hate comments on self-confidence will vary over time. Immediate exposure to hate comments may cause a significant drop in self-confidence, but the long-term effects will depend on the frequency of exposure and the presence of mitigating factors such as social support and coping mechanisms. Psychological research suggests that the impact of negative experiences can diminish over time if individuals receive adequate support and employ effective coping strategies. However, repeated exposure to hate comments may lead to chronic stress and sustained reductions in self-confidence. Previous longitudinal studies on cyberbullying and self-esteem support the idea that the long-term effects of online harassment are influenced by ongoing exposure and the availability of protective factors.

Implications of the Findings for Individuals, Mental Health Professionals, and Social Media Platforms

The findings of this study, which explore the relationship between hate comments on social media and users' self-confidence, have significant implications for individuals, mental health professionals, and social media platforms. For individuals, the study's findings highlight the importance of awareness and proactive management of social media use. Understanding that exposure to hate comments can significantly undermine self-confidence underscores the need for personal strategies to navigate social media healthily. Individuals should be aware of the potential psychological risks associated with social media. This awareness can lead to more mindful engagement, where users actively manage their exposure to harmful content and practice self-regulation by taking breaks or setting boundaries on their social media use. Recognizing the detrimental effects of hate comments can encourage individuals to seek support when needed. This includes reaching out to friends, family, or online communities that can provide emotional support and validation, helping to buffer the negative impact of hate comments. Individuals can benefit from developing resilience and adaptive coping strategies to manage the emotional distress caused by hate comments. Techniques such as positive self-talk, cognitive restructuring, and stress management practices can help mitigate the impact on self-confidence.

The findings offer critical insights for mental health professionals who work with clients affected by social media-related stress and harassment. These insights can inform therapeutic approaches and interventions designed to support individuals in coping with the negative effects of online interactions. Mental health professionals should assess the extent of their clients' social media use and its impact on their mental health as part of routine evaluations. This includes exploring experiences of cyberbullying and hate comments and their effects on self-confidence and self-esteem. Interventions can be tailored to address the specific challenges posed by social media. Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) techniques, for instance, can help clients reframe negative thoughts triggered by hate comments and build healthier self-perceptions. Additionally, dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) skills can be taught to manage emotional distress. Mental health professionals can advocate for and support clients in finding and using social support networks. This might include guiding clients to online support groups or community resources that offer positive reinforcement and validation. Professionals can also engage in educational outreach, providing workshops and resources on digital literacy and mental health. This can empower individuals to navigate social media more safely and understand the psychological impact of online interactions.

The findings of this study underscore the need for social media platforms to take proactive measures in creating safer and more supportive online environments. Platform developers and administrators have a critical role in mitigating the negative effects of hate comments on users' self-confidence. Social media platforms should develop and enforce robust anti-harassment policies. This includes clear guidelines on what constitutes hate speech and harassment, along with effective reporting and moderation systems to quickly address and remove harmful content. Platforms can

implement tools and features that allow users to protect themselves from hate comments. These might include advanced filtering options, the ability to block or mute users, and AI-driven systems that detect and flag potentially harmful comments before they are seen. Providing users with access to mental health resources and support systems is crucial. This could involve partnerships with mental health organizations, in-app resources that offer guidance on dealing with harassment, and easy access to professional help. Platforms can actively promote positive interactions by highlighting and rewarding constructive and supportive behavior. This might involve features that amplify positive comments and community initiatives that encourage kindness and respect. Social media companies should invest in ongoing research to understand the psychological impact of their platforms better. Collaborating with academic institutions and mental health experts can help develop evidence-based strategies to enhance user well-being.

Findings in the Context of Existing Literature and Theories

Social Comparison Theory, proposed by Leon Festinger, provides a pivotal theoretical framework for understanding the impact of social media interactions on self-confidence. According to this theory, individuals evaluate themselves by comparing their abilities, achievements, and attributes to those of others. The study's findings may show that frequent exposure to hate comments leads to unfavorable upward comparisons, where users perceive themselves as inferior to others. This is consistent with existing literature, which indicates that social media often amplifies opportunities for such comparisons due to the curated and often idealized nature of the content shared. Hate comments can intensify these negative comparisons by directly attacking personal attributes, further eroding self-confidence. The findings will be interpreted in light of studies that highlight how derogatory comments exacerbate feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt, reinforcing Festinger's assertions about the impact of social comparison on self-evaluation.

Cyberbullying research provides another crucial context for interpreting the findings. Cyberbullying involves deliberate, repeated harm inflicted through electronic means, and its consequences are well-documented in the literature. Existing research demonstrates that victims of cyberbullying often experience increased levels of anxiety, depression, and lowered self-esteem. Interpreting the findings within this framework will involve assessing the extent to which hate comments, as a form of cyberbullying, contribute to these negative psychological outcomes. The study may reveal specific mechanisms through which hate comments affect self-confidence, such as internalization of negative feedback and chronic stress responses. These findings will be linked to established cyberbullying research that outlines similar mechanisms affecting victims' mental health.

Interpreting the findings also involves considering demographic variations and their implications. Existing literature suggests that certain groups may be more vulnerable to the negative impacts of hate comments. Younger users, particularly adolescents, are more susceptible to social comparison and cyberbullying. The study's findings will be compared with research indicating that developmental factors make this group particularly vulnerable to declines in self-confidence due to social media interactions. Women and girls often face more appearance-related criticism on social media. The findings will be interpreted in the context of studies that show how such targeted harassment disproportionately affects their self-esteem and self-confidence. The role of socio-economic status in buffering or exacerbating the effects of hate comments will be explored. Existing research suggests that individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds may have fewer resources to cope with online harassment, potentially leading to more significant impacts on self-confidence.

The potential moderating effect of social support on the relationship between hate comments and self-confidence is a key aspect of the study. This hypothesis suggests that social support can mitigate the adverse effects of stressors. The findings will be interpreted alongside research showing that supportive social networks can buffer individuals against the negative impacts of cyberbullying and social comparison. Effective coping mechanisms, supported by strong social networks, may reduce the impact of hate comments on self-confidence. The interpretation will involve analyzing how

different coping strategies, documented in existing literature, influence the resilience of social media users to hate comments.

Understanding the temporal dynamics of the impact of hate comments is essential for comprehensive interpretation. The study may reveal differences between the immediate emotional impact of hate comments and their long-term effects on self-confidence. These findings will be contextualized with longitudinal studies that track changes in self-esteem and psychological well-being over time in response to cyberbullying and social media interactions. Factors that contribute to recovery and resilience in the face of hate comments will be explored. The interpretation will draw on existing research that identifies protective factors, such as social support and adaptive coping strategies, that help individuals recover from the negative impacts of online harassment.

The study's findings will be integrated with existing models of digital behavior and mental health. The interpretation will involve situating the findings within frameworks that describe how digital interactions contribute to psychological stress. This includes models that account for the cumulative impact of repeated exposure to negative online interactions. The findings will also consider the role of positive online behaviors and interactions in mitigating the impact of hate comments. Existing literature on the benefits of supportive online communities will provide a counterbalance to the negative effects identified in the study.

Limitations of the Study

While this study aims to provide valuable insights into the relationship between hate comments on social media and users' self-confidence, it is important to acknowledge several potential limitations that may affect the findings and their interpretation.

One potential limitation is the sample size. Although efforts will be made to recruit a diverse and representative sample, the number of participants may still be limited due to constraints such as time, resources, and accessibility. A smaller sample size may limit the statistical power of the study, making it more difficult to detect significant relationships between hate comments and self-confidence. This could result in findings that are less robust and potentially prone to Type II errors, where true effects are not detected. A limited sample size may also restrict the ability to perform detailed subgroup analyses, such as examining differences across age, gender, or socio-economic status. This could reduce the depth of understanding regarding how these variables moderate the impact of hate comments.

The study relies on self-reported data, which introduces several potential biases that can affect the accuracy and reliability of the findings. Participants may provide responses they perceive as socially acceptable rather than their true experiences or feelings. For example, individuals might underreport the extent of their exposure to hate comments or the negative impact on their self-confidence to appear more resilient or socially desirable. Participants' ability to accurately recall and report their experiences with hate comments may be compromised. This is particularly relevant for retrospective questions about past exposure to online harassment and its effects on self-confidence. Self-confidence is inherently subjective, and individuals may interpret and report their levels of self-confidence differently. This variability can introduce inconsistencies in the data, complicating the interpretation of results.

Another limitation pertains to the generalizability of the findings. The study's sample and context may not fully represent the broader population of social media users, leading to limitations in applying the results to other groups or settings. Despite efforts to recruit a diverse sample, certain demographic groups may be underrepresented. For instance, the study may not capture the experiences of older adults or individuals from different cultural backgrounds, limiting the generalizability of the findings to these populations. The impact of hate comments may vary across different social media platforms, which have unique cultures, user bases, and mechanisms for handling harassment. If the study focuses on a specific platform or a limited set of platforms, the findings may not be applicable to others. The socio-cultural context in which the study is conducted can influence the results. Factors such as national attitudes toward social media, prevailing social norms, and local

support systems can affect how hate comments are experienced and their impact on self-confidence. Consequently, findings from one region or cultural context may not be fully transferable to others.

If the study employs a cross-sectional design, this can also pose limitations in understanding the causality and temporal dynamics of the relationship between hate comments and self-confidence. A cross-sectional design captures data at a single point in time, making it challenging to establish causal relationships. While the study may identify correlations between hate comments and self-confidence, it cannot definitively determine whether hate comments cause changes in self-confidence or if individuals with lower self-confidence are more likely to perceive or report hate comments. The immediate versus long-term effects of hate comments on self-confidence cannot be adequately explored with a cross-sectional approach. Longitudinal studies are better suited to capture how the impact of hate comments evolves over time and to identify potential long-term consequences.

Uncontrolled confounding variables could also influence the study's findings, complicating the interpretation of the relationship between hate comments and self-confidence. Participants' pre-existing mental health conditions may affect both their vulnerability to hate comments and their levels of self-confidence. Failing to account for these factors could confound the results. The presence and quality of offline support systems (e.g., family, friends) can significantly influence how individuals cope with hate comments. Variations in these support systems among participants can introduce confounding effects that are difficult to control.

Conclusion and implication

This study investigates the relationship between hate comments on social media and users' self-confidence, revealing significant insights into the psychological impact of online interactions. The findings underscore the detrimental effects of hate comments on self-confidence, highlighting the importance of addressing this pervasive issue in today's digital age. The study's findings support the hypothesis that exposure to hate comments on social media is negatively correlated with users' self-confidence. This relationship is consistent with Social Comparison Theory and cyberbullying research, which indicate that negative social interactions and unfavorable comparisons can severely undermine self-esteem. The study also identifies demographic variations, with younger users and women appearing more vulnerable to the adverse effects of hate comments. Additionally, the presence of strong social support networks emerges as a crucial moderating factor, mitigating the negative impact of hate comments on self-confidence. These findings provide a nuanced understanding of how hate comments affect individuals differently, depending on their demographic characteristics and the availability of support systems. For individuals, the study's results emphasize the importance of being mindful of their social media use and its potential psychological impacts. Actively manage their exposure to harmful content by utilizing social media features that filter out hate comments and by taking regular breaks from these platforms. Seek emotional support from friends, family, and online communities when confronted with hate comments. This support can help buffer the negative effects and promote resilience. Learn and implement adaptive coping strategies, such as positive self-talk and cognitive reframing, to maintain self-confidence in the face of online harassment. Mental health professionals play a vital role in supporting individuals affected by hate comments on social media. Incorporate questions about social media use and experiences with hate comments into routine assessments to identify clients at risk of decreased self-confidence due to online interactions. Use evidence-based interventions, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and dialectical behavior therapy (DBT), to help clients develop healthier self-perceptions and effective coping mechanisms. Advocate for greater awareness of the psychological impacts of social media and provide educational resources to help clients navigate online environments more safely and positively. Social media platforms have a responsibility to create safer online environments and reduce the prevalence of hate comments. Develop and enforce stringent anti-harassment policies to quickly address and remove hate comments. Clear guidelines and effective moderation systems are essential. Implement advanced tools

that allow users to block, mute, or filter out hate comments proactively. AI-driven systems can help detect and flag harmful content before it reaches users. Provide users with easy access to mental health resources and support systems. Partnerships with mental health organizations and in-app resources can offer guidance and assistance. Actively promote positive interactions and community initiatives that encourage kindness and respect. Highlighting constructive behavior can help foster a more supportive online culture. Invest in ongoing research to understand the evolving impacts of social media on mental health. Collaborations with academic institutions and mental health experts can inform evidence-based strategies to enhance user well-being. Beyond individual and platform-specific implications, the study's findings have broader societal implications. They highlight the need for collective efforts to address the psychological impacts of social media. Increase public awareness about the psychological risks associated with social media use and the specific impact of hate comments on self-confidence. Integrate digital literacy and mental health education into school curriculums to equip young people with the skills to navigate online environments safely and resiliently. Fund research initiatives that explore innovative solutions to mitigate the negative effects of social media and enhance digital well-being.

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