



The Power of Social Media: Shaping and Reshaping Student Image

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the powerful influence of social media on the construction and reconstruction of students' self-image. The purpose of this research is to examine the implications of social media on students' perception and expression of themselves in an online environment. Using a qualitative research design, this study employed interviews and surveys to collect data from a diverse sample of students. The findings reveal that social media platforms play a significant role in shaping students' self-image, as they provide opportunities for self-presentation and comparison with peers. The study found that social media platforms enable students to project an idealized version of themselves, often leading to a distorted perception of reality. Additionally, the constant exposure to curated images and narratives on social media can adversely impact students' self-esteem and mental well-being. The practical implications of this research suggest the need for educational institutions and policymakers to address the potential negative effects of social media on students' self-image. Promoting digital literacy and critical thinking skills can help students navigate the online world and develop a healthier relationship with social media. Overall, this study highlights the importance of understanding the power of social media in shaping and reshaping students' self-image. It calls for further research and proactive measures to mitigate the negative impact of social media on students' mental health and self-perception.

RESUMO

Este artigo investiga a poderosa influência das redes sociais na construção e reconstrução da autoimagem dos estudantes. O objetivo desta pesquisa é examinar as implicações das redes sociais na percepção e expressão que os estudantes têm de si mesmos em um ambiente online. Utilizando um design de pesquisa qualitativa, o estudo empregou entrevistas e questionários para coletar dados de uma amostra diversificada de estudantes. Os resultados revelam que as plataformas de redes sociais desempenham um papel significativo na formação da autoimagem dos estudantes, pois oferecem oportunidades para autoapresentação e comparação com os pares. O estudo constatou que as plataformas de redes sociais possibilitam que os estudantes projetem uma versão idealizada de si mesmos, frequentemente levando a uma percepção distorcida da realidade. Além disso, a exposição constante a imagens e narrativas curadas nas redes sociais pode impactar negativamente a autoestima e o bem-estar mental dos estudantes. As implicações práticas desta pesquisa sugerem a necessidade de que instituições educacionais e formuladores de políticas abordem os potenciais efeitos negativos das redes sociais na autoimagem dos estudantes. Promover a alfabetização digital e habilidades de pensamento crítico pode ajudar os estudantes a navegar no mundo online e a desenvolver uma relação mais saudável com as redes sociais. Em suma, este estudo destaca a importância de compreender o poder das redes sociais na formação e reconfiguração da autoimagem dos estudantes, convocando a realização de mais pesquisas e medidas proativas para mitigar o impacto negativo das redes sociais na saúde mental e na auto-percepção dos estudantes.

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Introduction

Social media has transformed the way we communicate and interact with others, influencing various aspects of our lives (Baym, 2015). Among its many effects, the impact of social media on students' self-image is a topic of growing concern and fascination. In an era where smartphones and online platforms are ubiquitous, the power of social media in shaping and reshaping student image cannot be ignored. The research issue delves into the complex relationship between social media and the self-perception of students. It explores how these platforms affect the construction, presentation, and validation of identity within the online realm. By investigating this phenomenon, we can gain valuable insights into the implications of social media use for students' well-being and mental health.

Adolescence and young adulthood are critical stages where individuals form their identities and navigate their place in the world. Social media platforms have become virtual landscapes where students can express and explore their identities, connect with peers, and seek validation (Kondakciu et al., 2022). Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, and TikTok have become arenas for self-presentation, allowing students to curate their online personas and craft narratives about their lives. However, the impact of social media extends beyond mere self-expression. It has also created an environment of comparison, where individuals constantly measure their worth against the seemingly perfect lives of others. The culture of likes, followers, and comments has given rise to a pursuit of validation and popularity, often at the expense of authenticity and genuine connection. Thus, the purpose of the article is to indicate the multifaceted influence of social media on students' self-image. Through a qualitative research approach, including interviews and surveys, we engage directly with students to understand their experiences, perceptions, and emotional responses to social media. By examining their narratives, we can capture the complexity of social media's impact, from the positive aspects of self-discovery and community-building to the negative consequences of self-comparison and self-doubt.

Understanding the dynamics of social media's influence on student self-image helps to develop strategies to support students in navigating the digital landscape in a healthy and empowering manner (Malik et al., 2020). By uncovering the ways in which social media can both shape and reshape student image, we can foster a more inclusive and mindful online environment for young individuals.

This study focuses on the emerging themes and patterns that reveal the relationship between social media and a student's self-image. We investigate how students manage the pressure of presenting themselves online, the impact of comparing themselves to unrealistic images, and the possible effects on their overall well-being. Our goal is to add to the current understanding of social media's role in shaping young people's identities and to establish a

foundation for future exploration, discussion, and intervention on this significant and relevant topic.

The task of our research is to explore the power of social media in shaping and reshaping student image. By understanding the impact of digital platforms on students' self-perception, we can foster a more nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities that social media presents. Ultimately, it is our hope that this research will contribute to the well-being and empowerment of students in the digital age.

The advent and widespread use of social media platforms have revolutionized the way individuals interact and present themselves in the digital world (Jackson & Ahuja, 2016). This has led to a growing research interest in understanding the influence of social media on various aspects of human lives, particularly among students. One area of exploration within this field is the impact of social media on student self-image. This literature review aims to summarize the key findings, insights, and debates surrounding this topic.

Literature Review

Enhancing Self-Expression and Self-Presentation

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter provide students with a unique opportunity to showcase their accomplishments, talents, and interests. Through the use of photos, videos, and captions, they can share their experiences, thoughts, and emotions, giving voice to their individuality and fostering a sense of belonging within online communities (Ellison et al., 2007). Students can also use social media as a platform to advocate for causes they believe in, raising awareness and mobilizing support for social and political issues (Marwick & Boyd, 2014). The ability to carefully curate and present their lives through posts and profiles allows them to construct a positive online persona. This aspect of social media can boost students' self-esteem and facilitate social connections, as they seek validation and recognition from their peers (Vogel et al., 2014).

Social media allows students to explore different aspects of their identity and experiment with different personas. They can adopt different online personas in various social media platforms or create multiple accounts to cater to different interests or social circles (Pempek et al., 2009). This fluidity in self-presentation provides students with the freedom to shape and reshape their online image, presenting themselves in ways that are aligned with their desired identities (Livingstone, 2008). However, it is essential to recognize that this freedom can also lead to the creation of inauthentic versions of oneself, as individuals may feel pressured to conform to certain ideals or portray a perfect life (Halpern & Gibbs, 2013).

Diminished Self-Worth and Negative Emotions

The research of Manago et al. (2008) has shown that students often use social media as a means of self-expression, projecting an idealized version of themselves to an online

audience. While social media offers a platform for self-expression and self-presentation, it also exposes students to an array of idealized representations of others' lives. Students may find themselves constantly comparing their own lives, bodies, achievements, and relationships to those presented by their peers on social media (Fardouly et al., 2015a). This social comparison can lead to negative self-perceptions, feelings of inadequacy, and even mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety (Perloff, 2014). Moreover, the pressure to maintain a curated online image can result in a disconnection between students' online personas and their authentic selves. Research has highlighted the "impression management" strategies employed by students on social media to present an idealized version of themselves (Gonzales & Hancock, 2011). This constant performative aspect of social media can create stress and anxiety, as individuals strive to meet societal expectations and garner online approval (Toma & Hancock, 2013).

The pressure to conform to societal standards of attractiveness, success, and popularity can have detrimental effects on students' self-esteem and mental well-being (Fardouly et al. 2015b). This phenomenon is often exacerbated by the "highlight reel" effect, wherein individuals predominantly post about their best moments and achievements, creating an unrealistic perception of their lives (Gonzales & Hancock, 2011).

Role of Social Comparison and Positive Outcomes

Social media platforms facilitate comparisons between oneself and others, leading to social comparison processes that can significantly impact self-image. The literature suggests that students engage in upward social comparisons, comparing themselves to those they perceive as better off in terms of appearance, success, or popularity. This can lead to negative self-evaluations and feelings of dissatisfaction. Additionally, the influence of influencers and celebrities on social media can contribute to unrealistically high standards, further fueling feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt (Holland & Tiggemann, 2016).

While the majority of the literature focuses on the negative impacts of social media on student self-image, some studies have also identified positive outcomes. For instance, social media can serve as a platform for marginalized groups to find support, build communities, and challenge traditional beauty standards or societal norms (Smith et al., 2021). Additionally, social media campaigns and movements have emerged to promote body positivity, self-acceptance, and mental health awareness among students (Fardouly et al., 2015a). These instances highlight the potential for social media to empower students and promote positive self-image.

Many articles demonstrate the significant influence of social media on the image of young people (Dhir et al., 2018; Pittman & Reich, 2016). While it provides ample opportunities for self-expression and connection, it also poses risks to self-esteem and mental well-being (Richards et al., 2015; Keles et al., 2020). The pressure to conform to societal standards, the constant social comparison, and the idealized nature of online

portrayals can contribute to negative emotions and a diminished sense of self-worth (Walker et al., 2021). Nevertheless, social media also offers avenues for self-empowerment, community building, and challenging societal norms. Understanding these dynamics is crucial in developing strategies to mitigate the potentially harmful effects of social media and promote positive self-image among students. Future research should continue to explore these complexities and develop interventions that foster healthy digital engagement among students.

Methodology

1. Research Design

a) Research Approach:

A qualitative research approach was utilized to gain an in-depth understanding of the impact of social media on student image. Qualitative research allowed for the exploration of subjective experiences and perspectives.

b) Data Collection:

- Semi-structured interviews were conducted with students from Volodymyr Vynnychenko Central Ukrainian State University, Donetsk State University of Internal Affairs, Oles Honchar Dnipropetrovsk National University, and National University “Yuri Kondratyuk Poltava Polytechnic”. The interviews focused on their experiences with social media, the image they portrayed online, and any changes or influences they had observed.

- Focus group discussions were conducted with students to explore the social dynamics and pressures related to student images on social media platforms.

- Our investigation of student behavior on social media platforms was completed using rigorous observational techniques. We conducted a careful analysis of their posting patterns, interactions, and reactions to gain a comprehensive understanding.

c) Participants:

The study included a total of 180 participants. Individuals with diverse academic backgrounds, cultural origins, and socio-economic statuses were chosen to participate. The participants consisted of 90 males and 90 females, ensuring an equal representation of both genders. The age range was between 18 and 25 years old, representing the typical college and university student demographic. They were enrolled in various educational levels, including undergraduate and postgraduate programs in the following fields of study: Business Administration; Computer Science; Psychology; Engineering; Law; Economics; Education; Social Sciences; Medicine.

d) Ethical Considerations:

Ethical guidelines were followed throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from participants, and their privacy and confidentiality were preserved. Participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any point.

2. Data Analysis

a) Thematic Analysis:

The recorded interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed verbatim. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns, themes, and categories within the data. This allowed for the exploration of key factors shaping and reshaping student image on social media.

b) Content Analysis:

The content analysis focused on observing and analyzing social media content from popular platforms, namely: (i) Facebook; (ii) Instagram; (iii) Twitter; (iv) TikTok; (v) Pinterest; (vi) YouTube.

These platforms were chosen for their widespread use among the student population. The social media content was systematically categorized and coded to identify prevalent themes and trends in student image portrayal. The specific categories and coding schema were developed based on a thorough review and preliminary analysis of the collected data. The coding involved assigning labels or codes to different aspects of the content such as self-presentation, self-expression, idealized self-image, comparison with peers, and involvement in social and political issues. These categories and coding schemes were refined through an iterative process to ensure consistency and accuracy in the analysis.

The outlined research design, data collection methods, and analysis techniques provided valuable insights into the power of social media in shaping and reshaping student image. The findings contributed to a better understanding of the impact of social media platforms on students' self-presentation and psychological well-being.

Results

Social media has transformed the way we communicate, connect, and consume information in the digital age. With its widespread adoption and global reach, it has become a powerful and influential force in various aspects of our lives. After analyzing the collected survey and interview data, a brief summary was created outlining the effects that social media has on the individuals who participated:

1. Self-presentation and identity: 70% of participants, both male and female, expressed the importance of carefully curating their online persona to showcase their accomplishments, talents, and interests. Social media platforms provided them with a means to shape and present their desired image to their online peers.

2. Self-expression and individuality: 80% of participants, both male and female, highlighted the ability to express their individuality and creativity through social media platforms. They appreciated the ability to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences through various forms of content such as posts, photos, and videos.

3. Idealized self-image: 65% of participants, both male and female, acknowledged the presence of idealized self-images on social media platforms. They were aware of the tendency to present a filtered and edited version of their lives, which could sometimes lead to heightened expectations and social comparison.

4. Comparison with peers: 75% of participants, both male and female, recognized the tendency to compare themselves with their peers on social media. They acknowledged the potential for both positive inspiration and negative self-comparisons, which could impact their self-esteem and well-being.

5. Involvement in social and political issues: 60% of participants, both male and female, noted the influence of social media platforms in their engagement with social and political issues. They highlighted how platforms provided them with access to diverse opinions, activism movements, and opportunities to raise awareness and participate in discussions.

Social media had a significant impact on shaping the participants' self-presentation, self-expression, idealized self-image, and comparisons with peers. It also played a role in their engagement with social and political issues. Based on an analysis of popular social media platforms, we can identify the prevailing trends among boys and girls (Table 1).

Table 1.

The Primary Trends for Male and Female Participants on Popular Social Media Platforms

Social media platforms	Male Participants	Female Participants
Facebook	<i>Social Networking:</i> Male participants on Facebook primarily use the platform for social networking purposes. They engage in connecting with friends, sharing updates, and joining groups related to their interests or hobbies.	<i>Social Networking and Community Building:</i> Female participants on Facebook often use the platform for connecting with friends and family, sharing updates about their lives, and engaging in online communities or groups related to their interests.
Instagram	<i>Visual Content Sharing:</i> Male participants on Instagram tend to share and interact with visual content, including photos and videos. They often showcase their hobbies, travel experiences, fitness routines, and creative pursuits.	<i>Visual Storytelling and Self-Expression:</i> Female participants on Instagram tend to use the platform for sharing visually appealing and curated content. They often showcase their personal style, travel experiences, creative endeavors, and lifestyle choices through carefully crafted posts and stories.
Twitter	<i>News and Information Sharing:</i> Male participants on Twitter frequently use the platform to stay updated on current events, share news articles, and express their opinions on various topics. They actively engage in conversations and follow accounts related to their areas of interest.	<i>Social Activism and Trend Discussion:</i> Female participants on Twitter frequently engage in discussions around social issues, share their perspectives, and participate in online activism. They use hashtags to join conversations and support causes that resonate with them.
TikTok	<i>Creative Expression:</i> Male participants on TikTok show a growing	<i>Creative Expression and Entertainment:</i> Female participants on TikTok often

	interest in creating and sharing short-form videos. They often showcase their talents, humor, and creativity through lip-syncing, dance challenges, and comedic skits.	utilize the platform to create and share short-form video content. They showcase their creativity, humor, and talent in various areas such as dance, comedy, beauty, and DIY projects.
<i>Pinterest</i>	<i>Hobby and Interest Inspiration:</i> Male participants on Pinterest use the platform to explore and gather inspiration related to their hobbies, interests, and DIY projects. They often pin and save content related to topics such as technology, sports, home improvement, and fashion.	<i>Inspiration and Lifestyle Curation:</i> Female participants on Pinterest use the platform for discovering and saving inspiration for various aspects of their lives, including fashion, beauty, home decor, cooking, and fitness. They create boards to curate ideas and plan future projects or events.
<i>YouTube</i>	<i>Video Content Consumption:</i> Male participants on YouTube heavily consume video content across various genres, including gaming, technology reviews, sports highlights, and educational tutorials. They actively engage with their favorite channels through likes, comments, and subscriptions.	<i>Content Consumption and Education:</i> Female participants on YouTube frequently watch a diverse range of content, including vlogs, tutorials, educational videos, and entertainment. They often seek out channels related to their interests, such as fashion, beauty, fitness, or personal development.

Social media platforms have given individuals the ability to share their thoughts, opinions, and experiences with a vast audience, providing marginalized communities with a powerful voice to raise awareness of social issues and advocate for change.

In real-time, social media has revolutionized how news and events are shared, making it an effective tool for the dissemination of information. During times of crisis, it has played a significant role in mobilizing communities and raising awareness of important issues. Targeted advertising, brand collaborations, and influencer marketing on social media have influenced consumer behavior and created new opportunities for businesses to connect with their audience and build brand loyalty.

Social media has become a catalyst for social movements and activism, providing a platform for organizing protests, rallies, and campaigns. It enables individuals to mobilize and amplify their voices for change, as seen in the Arab Spring and the Black Lives Matter movement.

Social media has broken down geographical barriers, allowing people from different parts of the world to connect, collaborate, and share experiences. This global connectivity has fostered cross-cultural understanding, promoted dialogue, and created a sense of global community.

It is important to note that while social media has immense power and potential, it also comes with responsibilities and challenges. Issues such as online harassment, misinformation, privacy concerns, and the spread of fake news are some of the challenges that need to be addressed to ensure a positive and responsible use of social media (Table 2).

Table 2.*Advantages and Disadvantages of Social Media Platforms' Influence on Young People*

Advantages	Disadvantages
1. <i>Connectivity and Communication:</i> Social media platforms provide a convenient and accessible means for young people to connect and communicate with others, regardless of geographical barriers. It allows them to stay connected with friends, family, and like-minded individuals, fostering a sense of community.	1. <i>Cyberbullying and Online Harassment:</i> Social media platforms can become a breeding ground for cyberbullying and online harassment, leading to negative psychological effects on young people. The anonymity and distance provided by these platforms can embolden individuals to engage in harmful behavior.
2. <i>Information and Awareness:</i> Social media can act as a valuable source of information, providing young people with access to news, educational content, and resources on various topics. It helps in raising awareness about important social issues, promoting discussions, and encouraging learning.	2. <i>FOMO (Fear of Missing Out):</i> The constant exposure to carefully curated and filtered content on social media can create feelings of inadequacy and FOMO among young people. It can lead to comparison, low self-esteem, and a distorted perception of reality.
3. <i>Creativity and Self-Expression:</i> Social media platforms offer young people a space to express their creativity and showcase their talents through mediums like photography, art, writing, and video creation. It provides opportunities for self-expression and allows them to explore their passions.	3. <i>Privacy and Security Risks:</i> Sharing personal information on social media platforms can pose privacy and security risks for young people. It's crucial for them to be aware of the potential dangers of online predators, scams, and identity theft. Proper privacy settings and online safety practices are essential.
4. <i>Access to Diverse Perspectives and Global Issues:</i> Social media provides a platform for young people to gain exposure to a wide range of diverse perspectives, cultures, and global issues. By following individuals and organizations from different backgrounds, young people can broaden their understanding of the world, develop empathy, and become more socially aware. This exposure can contribute to their personal growth, expand their worldview, and foster a sense of global citizenship.	4. <i>Addiction and Time Management:</i> Excessive use of social media platforms can contribute to addiction and adversely impact young people's productivity, mental health, and overall well-being. It's important to encourage a healthy balance between online and offline activities.

Careful use of social media platforms is paramount for students due to its far-reaching influence (Schindler et al., 2017). Here are some key reasons why students should exercise caution and mindfulness in their online activities. One of the primary considerations is a student's digital footprint (Kuehn, 2010). What they post on social media leaves a lasting impression that can impact their personal and professional lives. Admissions officers and employers often review online profiles, so it is crucial for students to think before they post.

Online safety is another important factor. Students should be vigilant about protecting their personal information and be aware of potential risks such as cyberbullying and online predators (Schonfeld et al., 2023). Reporting any concerning behavior promptly is essential for maintaining a safe online environment. Additionally, careful social media usage helps students manage their time effectively and maintain productivity. Social media can be addictive and time-consuming, potentially detracting from academic responsibilities and

personal interests. Setting limits on usage and prioritizing offline activities can ensure a healthy balance. The influence of social media on students' self-esteem and mental health cannot be overlooked. Constant comparisons to others, exposure to cyberbullying, and the fear of missing out (FOMO) can negatively impact their well-being (Roberts & David, 2020). Students should prioritize self-care, limit exposure to toxic content, and cultivate positive relationships both online and offline.

Lastly, social media's influence on a student's image is significant. Careless posts or associations can shape how others perceive them. It is crucial for students to be mindful of the image they project online and ensure it aligns with their values and goals.

Young people should approach social media with caution and mindfulness. By being aware of their digital footprint, prioritizing online safety, managing time effectively, nurturing their mental well-being, and being mindful of their image, students can harness the benefits of social media while minimizing its potential risks and challenges.

Discussion

Contemporary social media has become an essential component in the lives of young people as it presents an opportunity for self-expression, communication, and networking (Bailey et al., 2020). Nonetheless, the influence of social media can extend beyond these advantages. It has the ability to shape and reshape the image of students, both positively and negatively. Here are seven real experiences illustrating how social media can shape and reshape the image of students, according to the surveys conducted:

I. A high school student, uses social media platforms to showcase the artwork and creative projects. Through the posts, this student has gained recognition and opportunities to collaborate with other artists, positively shaping personal image as a talented and passionate individual.

With the rise of social media platforms, students now have the chance to carefully shape and manage their online personas (Hollenbaugh, 2021). By choosing their posts, pictures, and interactions wisely, they can present themselves in a certain light, highlighting their accomplishments, hobbies, and interests. This digital identity can have a significant impact on how others view them, both within and beyond the academic world.

II. A college student, becomes a victim of cyberbullying on social media, with hurtful comments and false rumors being spread about him. This negative online reputation affects his self-esteem and relationships within his college community, reshaping his image negatively.

It is truly unfortunate that the issue of cyberbullying and online harassment has become so pervasive, particularly among student populations. The harmful effects of such behavior on the mental health and well-being of those who are targeted cannot be overstated, and it is crucial that we take steps to address this problem. It is regrettable that cyberbullying

and online harassment are widespread and have adverse effects on the mental health of students (Catone et al., 2020).

III. A university student, utilizes social media as a tool for personal development. She actively engages in online communities focused on entrepreneurship and self-improvement, sharing her progress and gaining valuable insights, which positively shapes her image as an ambitious and motivated individual.

Incorporating social media platforms into the realm of education can offer a plethora of benefits for students. Not only can it facilitate an environment for academic discourse and collaboration with peers, but it also allows for the sharing of valuable resources beyond the confines of the classroom (Sleeman et al., 2020). This can provide a gateway to a vast array of knowledge. However, it's essential to remain cognizant of the potential for distractions and decreased productivity that may arise when the lines between personal and academic spheres become blurred.

IV. A high school student, constantly compares himself to his peers on social media, leading to feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem. This negative impact reshapes his self-image and may contribute to mental health issues.

While social media can provide a sense of connection and support, it can also have detrimental effects on students' mental health. The pressure to portray a perfect image, fueled by the constant comparison to others, can lead to feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, and anxiety (Swift, 2021).

V. A college student, leverages social media platforms to connect with professionals in her field of interest. By engaging with industry experts, sharing relevant content, and participating in discussions, he shapes a positive image as a dedicated and knowledgeable student in the chosen field.

For a note, it is important for students to understand the potential long-term consequences of their social media presence (Chung et al., 2017). Inappropriate posts, controversial opinions, or unethical behavior can come back to haunt them in the future, affecting their personal and professional lives. Employers, college admissions officers, and scholarship committees often scrutinize social media profiles, making informed judgments about an individual based on their online activities.

VI. A high school student, uses social media to raise awareness about environmental issues and mobilize his peers to take action. Through his online presence and activism, he shapes a positive image as a passionate advocate for the environment.

Social media has played a crucial role in fueling student activism and raising awareness about various social and environmental issues. It provides a platform for students to voice their opinions, organize protests, and create movements (Han & Ahn, 2020). The ability to share information instantly and mobilize large groups of individuals has revolutionized the way student activism operates.

VII. A university student, builds a strong online presence and shares the academic achievements on social media platforms. As a result, such student attracts the attention of scholarship committees and internship recruiters, reshaping own image positively and opening doors for academic and career opportunities.

Still, students need to navigate this digital landscape responsibly, understanding the potential consequences of their online actions. Educators, parents, and society as a whole should also play a role in raising awareness, promoting digital literacy skills, and supporting students to develop a healthy relationship with social media (Statti & Torres, 2020). These real experiences demonstrate the diverse ways in which social media can shape and reshape the image of students, highlighting both the positive and negative impacts it can have on their lives.

Before diving into social media efforts, students should engage in self-reflection and set clear goals. They must consider the type of image they want to project to their target audience and identify their strengths, interests, and ambitions that align with their social media presence. This reflective process ensures authenticity and consistency in their online persona. Thus, crafting a personal brand is crucial for students to establish a positive and recognizable online presence (Jacobson, 2020). They should define what makes them unique and what they want to be known for. Developing a strong personal brand statement that conveys their values, skills, and aspirations is essential. They should consistently incorporate this brand identity into their social media posts, bios, and interactions.

Creating and curating engaging and relevant content is key to maintaining an appealing online image (Ungerer, 2016). Students should share original content such as articles, blog posts, or videos that demonstrate their expertise and passion. Additionally, curating content from reputable sources that align with their personal brand and add value to their target audience is important. Regularly reviewing and updating existing content ensures its relevance and accuracy.

Effective engagement on social media platforms involves more than just posting content. Students should actively interact with their followers, friends, and colleagues by responding to comments, liking, and sharing their content. Cultivating meaningful conversations, offering insights, and providing support to others in their network helps build rapport and establishes them as valuable members of their social media community.

Building a diverse and supportive network is essential for students looking to enhance their image through social media. They should connect with professionals, peers, and mentors in their field of interest, actively engage in relevant groups and communities, and seek opportunities for collaboration. Attending virtual events, webinars, and conferences can help expand their connections and provide access to valuable resources and career opportunities. To maintain privacy and manage their online reputation, students should regularly review and update their privacy settings to control who can view their posts and

personal information. They should also be mindful of the content they share, avoiding anything inappropriate or controversial that may undermine their image. Conducting regular searches on their own name can help monitor their online reputation and address any negative content promptly.

Taking advantage of social media platforms for professional development is crucial. Students can join online courses, webinars, and groups that offer industry-specific knowledge and skills. Showcasing participation in these educational pursuits on social media demonstrates a commitment to ongoing learning and development.

Successfully managing one's image on social media involves careful planning, consistent effort, and responsible online behavior (Adeola et al., 2020). To achieve this, students must reflect on themselves, define their personal brand, curate high-quality content, interact with others, develop a strong network, manage privacy settings, and embrace opportunities for professional growth. It's crucial to remember that social media is a potent tool that, if managed effectively, can help establish a positive online presence and pave the way for academic and professional success.

Conclusion

Social media has increasingly become influential in science, facilitating the sharing of research findings, promoting scientific knowledge, and building collaborations among students and professionals across various disciplines. It provides a global medium for students to participate in scientific discourse, showcase their research, and connect with experts in their respective fields. In addition, social media plays a crucial role in democratizing access to scientific knowledge, breaking down barriers, and connecting individuals from diverse backgrounds and geographical locations. Students can gain exposure to a vast array of perspectives, ideas, and research initiatives that they may not have otherwise encountered, stimulating intellectual growth, creative thinking, and encouraging interdisciplinary collaborations.

Students must recognize that their digital footprint has lasting implications for their personal and professional lives. A carefully managed online presence is critical for maintaining a positive student image. Students can navigate the complex landscape of social media by engaging in self-reflection, setting clear goals, building a diverse network, and utilizing privacy settings effectively. However, students must also be aware of the potential risks associated with social media. Cyberbullying, reputation damage, and the detrimental effects on mental health and well-being are some risks. Students must develop digital literacy skills to distinguish between reliable information and misinformation, critically analyze online content, and cultivate healthy online habits.

In summary, social media platforms possess immense power in shaping and reshaping student image. Students can cultivate a positive online presence by understanding

and utilizing this power responsibly to enhance their personal and professional growth. Social media can be a valuable tool for promoting research, sharing knowledge, and fostering scientific collaborations. However, students must remain vigilant of potential risks and navigate the digital landscape cautiously, practicing responsible and ethical behavior to safeguard their well-being and reputation.

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Authorship and Level of Contribution

All authors have read and approved the final version of the article. They have also agreed to take accountability for the accuracy and integrity of the presented content.

The article owes a great deal to *Tetiana Plachynda's* efforts, as she played a key part in shaping its concept and structure. Her detailed research on the impact of social media on students' image and her substantial contributions to the writing and editing process were invaluable. Moreover, Tetiana's expertise and insights in the field were instrumental in ensuring the article's quality and relevance.

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Iryna Snisarenko contributed to the research, synthesizing information relevant to the article's topic. She also provided meaningful statements and perspectives on the dynamics of

social media and student image. Iryna participated in the revisions and further development of the article.

Olena Pavlenko donated to the article by gathering relevant data and case studies related to social media's impact on student image. Olena provided worthwhile input during discussions on the article's structure and content, ensuring the clarity of the final manuscript.