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Social Network Influence on Educational Continuation and Career Choice: A Review

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Abstract. Social media platforms have altered the way that students access academic information, seek career advice, and make learning decisions. Platforms like LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube are having a clearly perceptible twin effect on the career goals, skill acquisition, and professional network of students. While these websites are useful resources for mentorship and exposure to industry here, they also present problems of misinformation, romanticized career descriptions, and biased algorithms that can mislead students about possible career options. By examining actual case studies, this paper examines how students from various socio-economic backgrounds interact with career content online and how algorithmic suggestions influence their aspirations. Blending empirical evidence and statistical trends, we present a balanced assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of online career guidance. Findings provide educational implications which are of critical concern, and these include promoting media literacy programs, institutional intervention, and evidence-based interventions to enhance the benefits of social networks and avoid their limitations. The research provides insights for educators, policymakers, career counsellors, and other stake holders in promoting informed decision making among students based on digital influences in education.

Keywords: Social Network, Career Choice, Educational Continuation, Peer Influence, Aspirations

Introduction

The rise of social networking websites has significantly reshaped how students' access information, receive academic and career guidance, and make educational choices. Platforms such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube serve as tools for career exploration networking, mentorship, and skill-development. LinkedIn facilitates direct engagement with professionals and organizations, offering students valuable insights into industry trends and job markets demands [19]. Twitter fosters scholarly debate and knowledge sharing among thought leaders [43]. Facebook groups and Reddit forums offer peer-to-peer academic support while platforms like Instagram and TikTok increasingly feature career-oriented content, though their credibility varies

Despite their benefits social networking sites introduce challenges including misinformation, idealized career portrayals, and psychological stress arising from curated online personas. The dissemination of misleading career information – such as exaggerated depictions of lucrative jobs requiring minimal training – can distort students' perceptions of viable career pathways [36]. Moreover the "highlight reel" effect on social media, where individuals selectively showcase achievements, has been associated with increasing academic stress, self-doubt, and mental health concerns [13].

The past researches have examined both the advantages and disadvantages of social networks in educational choices, further investigations is needed to identify the specific factors influencing students carer decisions For instance, how do individuals from diverse socio-economic backgrounds engage with career-related content online? To what extent do d algorithmic-driven content recommendations influence their aspirations?

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This Study aims to analyse real world case studies that highlight influence of social media on different aspect related to student contexts By integrating empirical evidence, statistical trends, and recorded phenomena, we hope to offer a balanced evaluation of how digital inferences affect educational outcomes and to propose evidence based strategies for mitigating the risks associated with online career guidance along with enhancing their benefits.

Social Network

Social network is defined as a system of individuals or organizations connected through social relations, communication, and interactions often facilitated by online platforms. Social networks play a crucial role on knowledge exchange, resource access, and decision-making. Through [21], it can be defined that social networks act as conduits for the flow of social capital that allows people to access information, opportunities, and assistance that shape their educational and occupational achievement. [5] explain social networks in the online world as "web-based services that permit individuals to create a public or semi-public profile, define a list of contacts, and view their friends' activities within the system." [8] identifies the significance of structural holes in social networks, emphasizing how individuals with broader networks gain competitive advantages in career and educational advancement.

Educational Continuation

Educational continuation is a person's continued engagement in educational studies after obligatory education, as driven by internal motivation, external support, and structural elements. [42] introduces a student retention model that highlights academic integration, social connection, and institutional support as decisive factors of educational continuation. [32] identify that the persistence of students in education is determined by socioeconomic status, availability of economic resources, and institutional policy.

[11] explain the socialization and parental expectations involved in students' choice to pursue further education. Identifying these factors can assist in creating specific strategies to aid students in their academic pursuits.

Career Choice

Career choice is the process by which people choose a career or occupational course based on personal interests, talent, social reasons, and economic reasons. [20] introduce the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) according to which self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and social support are major factors in career choice. [16] discusses a developmental career aspiration model with emphasis on the role of societal expectations, gender roles, and self-concept in career choice. [38] recommends the life-span, life-space approach, demystifying that career choice is an experiential process dictated by experience, changing interests, and context. Understanding these dynamics is what can make one have a well-decided career path as well as adapt to new career terrain.

Case Studies Illustrating the Impact of Social Networks on Students Integration in Emerging Social Networks and Academic Success

A research article in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) investigated how social networks among students can impact their school performance. The study followed 226 undergraduate students and found that good study partnerships often came from casual friendships. Students who were more alone socially had lower exam scores and a higher chance of dropping out of university [23]. This shows why it is important to build friendships and join study groups for better academic success.

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Community Support and Student Retention

Murdoch University in Australia has proved that it is possible to enhance the impact of promoting an open and friendly community on students' achievement and retention. The university operates OnTrack Flex and K-Track programs, which are alternative points of entry and engage students with various backgrounds. Such programs increase the rate of retaining students, facilitate diversity in the workplace, and improve work-related flexibility [28].

Social Mobility Through Apprenticeship Programs

The University of Greenwich in the UK has received an award for facilitating social mobility through enabling young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to attain higher earnings and professional success through their apprenticeship schemes. These schemes overcame economic constraints and lack of career advice by training in high-demand sectors like healthcare, construction, and engineering. This program reflects the significance of open practices in informing career choices [41].

The Role of Digital Literacy in Career Decision-Making

In [22] study, students with solid digital skills were able to find reliable career advice on platforms like LinkedIn and YouTube. In contrast, students who lacked strong digital skills tended to believe false facts, like hyperbolic pay or deceptive "get-rich-quick" job opportunities. Those schools that taught digital skills saw their students make more informed choices about education and employment.

The Effect of Career Influencers on Student Motives

Social media career influencers are largely impacting the career decisions of students. Based on a 2022 [40] study, students who followed career influencers on TikTok and Instagram considered new career avenues such as freelancing and entrepreneurship. While others were helped by these new avenues, others received unrealistic expectations and became unhappy in their careers. This shows that career advice through influencers can be both negative and positive.

Algorithmic Bias and Career Aspirations

Recent studies by [31] indicate that social media algorithms shape students' career conceptions by promoting content that is consistent with what they have searched for before. For example, low-income students were more likely to be recommended content regarding trade careers and gig economy employment compared to higher-income students, who were recommended for finance, law, and tech-related careers. The current research is sounding the alarm about algorithmic bias in choosing a career and intervention that provides an equal opportunity to access a wide range of career information.

These case studies portray the intricate and sophisticated role of social networks in maintaining students, educational motivation, and professional development. They necessitate a requirement to foster supportive learning environments and information provision that is credible, accurate, and relevant and capable of guiding the students to inform their educational and career choices.

Literature Review

Theoretical Background

Several well-theorized accounts offer a map of how social networks influence career and educational decision-making among students. These accounts explain how students engage with, process, and respond to information obtained through online networks and social media.

2.1 Social Learning Theory [3]

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory holds that people acquire behaviour, values, and attitudes by watching other people. Transferred to social media, the theory accounts for students learning http://jier.org
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career ambitions and study habits from internet exposure. For instance, students viewing professionals on LinkedIn or viewing education influencers on YouTube can copy career decisions and means of acquiring skills, as well as study habits, from them. Knowledge of the contribution of observational learning in virtual settings is important to enabling effective career planning and academic resilience.

2.3 Uses and Gratifications Theory [18]

The Uses and Gratifications Theory suggests that individuals actively pursue media to fulfil some needs—such as acquiring information, constructing personal identity, and establishing social connections. For students, social networks are sites for exploring career paths, discovering academic resources, and connecting with professionals. This independent information-seeking process, however, also carries threats like exposure to misinformation and biased representations of some careers.

2.4 Theory of Planned Behaviour [1]

Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) suggests that an individual's intention to engage in a behaviour—such as a career—is determined by three primary variables:

Attitudes: Subjective views of the individual regarding the appeal of a career option.

Subjective Norms: Social norms and pressures from peers, relatives, and online communities.

Perceived Behavioural Control: Individual's belief in their ability to perform a career.

2.5 Social Capital Theory [4,10,33]

Social Capital Theory explains the way social networks are resources offering access to information, advice, and opportunities. Social capital, when used to refer to the career decision-making of students, is divided into two broad types:

Bonding Social Capital: Close relationships (family, friends, classmates) that are sources of emotional support and reinforcement of existing career aspirations.

Bridging Social Capital: Connections with professionals, educators, and mentors that broaden students' awareness of career possibilities.

These theories collectively highlight the impact of social networks on career perspectives, educational engagement, and professional choices among learners. Despite the provision of quality career guidance and mentorship through social media, there are risks such as misguidance and social pressure. Integrating online literacy programs and structured career guidance can empower students to enjoy the complete advantage of social networks without suffering potential disadvantages.

Thematic Analysis

Positive Effects of Social Media on Education and Career Development

Research shows that social media sites enable career networking and mentorship. [14] established that students who are active users of career content on LinkedIn and Twitter tend to continue education and professional growth due to exposure to bridging social capital. The network offers internship opportunities, career advice, and skill development resources, resulting in improved career choice-making.

[45] explored social media's influence on career readiness and professional identity formation. Results indicate that constructive interaction with practitioners in the profession via platforms like LinkedIn enhances self-efficacy and career pathway clarity among students.

Academic Engagement and Collaborative Learning

[25] investigated ways in which social media platforms like Facebook groups, Reddit forums, and YouTube channels improve academic collaboration. According to their findings, these platforms

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facilitate peer-to-peer learning, sharing of knowledge, and discussions that enhance the educational experience of students

[43] pointed out how Twitter enriches academic discourse beyond the classroom environments, creating student and teacher connectedness. Based on the findings, students using Twitter for academic discourse exhibit a greater level of critical thinking as well as teamwork.

Skill Development and Informal Learning

[39] explored how social media microlearning such as LinkedIn Learning courses, TED Talks, and career-related skill-based TikTok or YouTube videos is an important driver of upskilling students in coding, business, communication, and other career skills.

YouTube tutorials have emerged as a significant resource for students learning technical skills, especially in programming and graphic design, according to [34]. According to the study, students who use YouTube for self-directed learning have better problem-solving skills and a higher rate of skill retention.

Negative Effects of Social Media on Career Decision-Making Social Comparison and Unrealistic Expectations

[6] emphasized the adverse psychological effects of social media, demonstrating that students often compare themselves to peers and influencers on Instagram and TikTok, resulting in unrealistic career goals and discontent. The manipulated success stories on social media tend to create unrealistic perceptions, leading to anxiety and disappointment among students who are unable to achieve unrealistic career goals.

[9] discovered that students who view highly edited online content view their own lives as less successful, with reduced motivation and unrealistic expectations of career paths.

Misinformation and Career Misguidance

[17] chronicled the way misinformation about well-paying, no-education jobs has precipitated ill-fated career choices and employment instability. Students leave formal education based on false tales of success in such jobs, only to suffer from lack of stable employment.

[44] accounted for the faster spread of misinformation compared to the truth on social media, making career misguidance and high expectations among students worse.

The Role of Social Capital in Career Decision-Making Influence of Strong and Weak Social Capital

[21] contends that students possessing strong social capital—networks with mentors, teachers, and professionals—are better positioned to persist in school and make informed career decisions. On the other hand, students with limited bridging social capital depend on peer pressure and viral culture, making choices that are potentially not conducive to long-term stability.

[33] purported that social capital is pivotal in career decision-making, with diversified online connections for students allowing them improved access to career information.

Effect of Social Networks on Education Continuation and Career Options

Social networks have a twofold role in determining students' career choices and educational persistence. Positively, online platforms allow for mentorship, increase awareness of careers, and support skill development through informal education [15]. They also strengthen bridging social capital by enabling networking that enhances career opportunities.

Social networks also bring challenges, though. Misinformation regarding career success, social comparison stresses, and differences in social capital, can cause poor career choices and academic disconnection [26]. The stress brought about by unrealistic presentation of success on social media can also influence students' mental health, impacting their continuity in education and career goals.

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Critical Discussion

Whereas past research emphasizes the advantages and limitations of social networks in student educational decision-making, areas continue to be unexamined regarding the differential effects by students' socioeconomic status, digital literacy, and algorithmic-driven content exposure. For example, with the exception of a few studies, most of the research is based on self-reported surveys instead of experimental or longitudinal designs, which restricts causal interpretation. Platform-level research is required to determine how various social media algorithms influence students' scholarly and career paths.

Literature Review Table

Table 1: Year-wise Systematic Review

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S.No	Author(s)	Year		Key Insight
1	Super	1990	Life-Span, Life-Space Approach to Career Development	Career choice is a lifelong process shaped by experiences, interests, and environment.
2	Tinto	1993	Student Retention and Educational Continuation	Academic integration, social engagement, and institutional support determine persistence.
3	Gottfredson	1981	Developmental Theory of Career Aspirations	Societal norms, gender roles, and self-concept influence career choices.
4	Lent, Brown, & Hackett	1994	Social Cognitive Career Theory	Self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and social support impact career decision-making.
5	Burt	2000	The Network Structure of Social Capital	Structural holes in networks provide competitive advantages in career and education.
6	Brown & Duguid	2000	Social Learning and Educational Media	YouTube tutorials influence study habits and academic engagement.
7	Putnam	2000	Social Capital in Career Decision- Making	Diverse social connections improve career-related opportunities and information access.
8	Armitage & Conner	2001	Planned Behaviour and Career Decision-Making	Peer discussions in career forums shape students' career intentions.
9	Lin	2001	Social Capital: A Theory of Social Structure and Action	Social networks serve as channels for accessing information, opportunities, and support.
10	Eccles et al.	2004	Influence of Socialization on College Enrollment	Parental expectations and task-value beliefs affect students' decisions to pursue higher education.
11	Shrum	2004	Cultivation Theory and Career Expectations	High media consumption fosters unrealistic career and salary expectations.
12	Boyd & Ellison	2007	Definition, History, and Scholarship of Social Networks	Social networks enable profile creation, connection articulation, and activity visibility.
13	Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe	2007	Social Capital and Online Networking	LinkedIn users develop stronger career networks and professional opportunities.
14	Perna & Thomas	2008	Theoretical Perspectives on Student Success	Socioeconomic background and institutional policies shape educational continuation.
15	Kietzmann et al.		Social media and Networking in Professional and Educational Settings	LinkedIn and other platforms facilitate professional engagement and career development.
16	Chou & Edge	2012	Social Comparison and Career Perception	Students perceive their lives as less successful, leading to decreased motivation.
17	Veletsianos	2012	Academic Use of Twitter for Knowledge Sharing	Twitter enhances academic discussions and networking among scholars and students.
18	Veletsianos & Kimmons	2012	Twitter in Academic Discussions	Twitter fosters academic collaboration and critical thinking beyond classrooms.

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S.No	Author(s)	Year	Title	Key Insight
19	Sundar & Limperos	2013	Uses and Gratifications in Career Exploration	Students using social media for career advice encounter mixed reliability.
20	Fardouly & Vartanian	2016	Social Media's Psychological Effects on Students	The "highlight reel" effect contributes to academic anxiety and self-doubt.
21	Manca & Ranieri	2016	Social media for Academic Engagement	Platforms like Facebook and YouTube improve peer learning and knowledge sharing.
22	Noble	2018	Algorithmic Bias and Career Aspirations	Social media algorithms shape students' career perceptions based on socioeconomic background.
23	Vosoughi et al.	2018	Spread of Misinformation on social media	Career misinformation spreads faster than verified information, misleading students.
24	Rowe	2019	YouTube as a Tool for Self- Directed Learning	Video-based learning enhances problem-solving and skill retention.
25	Lomi et al.	2019	Integration in Emerging Social Networks and Academic Success	Socially isolated students had lower grades and higher dropout rates.
26	Zhao et al.	2020	Social media and Career Preparedness	Engagement with industry professionals increases self-efficacy and career clarity.
27	Guess et al.	2020	Misinformation and Career Misguidance	False narratives on social media lead students to poor career decisions.
28	Livingstone et al.	2021	The Role of Digital Literacy in Career Decision-Making	Higher digital literacy aids career choices, while misinformation misleads students.
29	Gonzalez & Lee	2021	The Role of Professional Networking Platforms in Career Decision-Making	LinkedIn and Twitter enhance career awareness, networking, and access to professional resources.
30	Tang & Hew	2022	Social media and Skill Development	LinkedIn Learning, TED Talks, and YouTube tutorials improve student upskilling.
31	Tang & Hew	2022	Credibility of Career-Related Content on social media	Instagram and TikTok provide career content but vary in reliability.
32	Teng et al.	2022	The Influence of Career Influencers on Student Aspirations	Career influencers can inspire or mislead students, affecting their aspirations.
33	Brown & Davis	2022	Social media and Unrealistic Career Expectations	Instagram and TikTok create distorted career aspirations due to curated success stories.
34	Miller	2022	Social media and Career Choice	Digital portrayals on social media impact students' career aspirations and decisions.
35	Statista		Impact of social media on Career Perceptions	Misinformation and idealized portrayals distort students' career expectations.
36	The Guardian	2025	Social Mobility Through Apprenticeship Programs	Apprenticeships help disadvantaged youth secure better career outcomes.
37	Murdoch University	n.d.	Community Support and Student Retention	Inclusive university programs enhance student retention and workforce diversity.

Analytical Summary of Table 1: Trends and Theoretical Perspectives

The discussed research points out the significance of online media and social networks in education continuation and career choice. Academic exchange, professional networking, and skill development that lead to employability and openness are occurring effectively on social media sites such as LinkedIn, Twitter, and YouTube [19, 12, 25]. The influence of these websites is not necessarily positive. Misinformation, carefully constructed success stories, and algorithmic biases on social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok can mislead students' career perception and create unrealistic perceptions and ill-informed decisions [6, 17, 31].

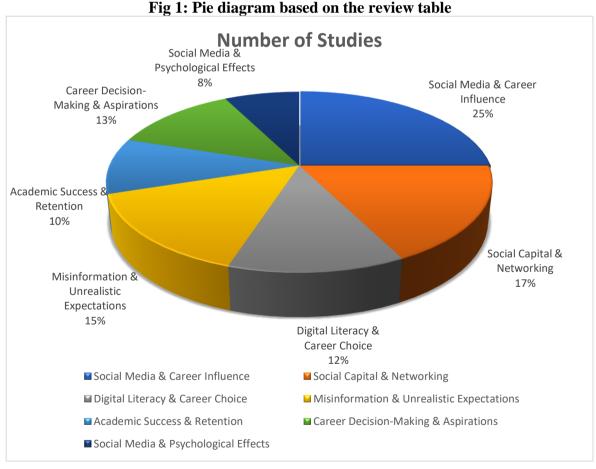
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The value of social capital to career selection is further highlighted as studies prove that social networks with differing contacts are good for the growth of one's career and sources of information access [33, 21]. Another theoretical model, such as the Social Cognitive Career Theory [20] and the Life-Span, Life-Space model [38], focuses on the enduring role of socialization, self-confidence, and supportive systems on careers.

In addition, digital literacy becomes crucial, with greater digital ability facilitating better career decision-making and less exposure to misinformation [22]. The growing number of career influencers, online education platforms, and social networking platforms indicates that the digital world will continue to have a greater impact on learners' educational pathways and career goals [39, 15,].

Finally, although social media and networking sites are a powerful vehicle for education and career searching, their impact is complex. Educational institutions and teachers need to encourage digital literacy, critical thinking, and sensitivity towards algorithmic bias to enable students to effectively use career information. Future studies must prioritize methods of prevention of misinformation and promoting the beneficial use of social media in career development.

An interpretation of the pie diagram based on the review table:



Interpretation of the Pie Chart on Social Networks, Education, and Career Choices

Literature surveyed groups research into seven broad themes of social media, career choices, and learning achievements. The broadest emphasis (25%) is on social media and Career Influence, meaning the way social websites like LinkedIn, TikTok, and Instagram help shape career aspirations and, secondly, how algorithmic bias will tend to perpetuate disparities. Social Capital and Networking

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(17%) investigates the advantage of online networking to enhance exposure to career prospects and professional networks.

Digital Literacy and Career Choice (12%) emphasizes the importance of critical digital literacy in the evaluation of online career guidance. Misinformation and Unrealistic Career Aspirations (15%) reflects concern about unrealistic portrayals of success on social media that obscure students' perceptions of career realities.

Additionally, Academic Success and Student Retention (10%) connects online engagement and institutional support to academic persistence. Career Decision-Making and Aspirations (13%) utilizes theoretical models such as Social Cognitive Career Theory and Life-Span, Life-Space Theory to describe how socialization and self-concept affect aspirations. Finally, social media and Psychological Effects (8%) covers the emotional and cognitive effect of social media exposure such as anxiety and self-doubt that affect academic and career-related decisions.

The findings suggest that social media plays a dual role in career development. While platforms such as LinkedIn facilitate professional growth, others may promote unrealistic expectations. Social capital and digital literacy are essential for navigating career decisions effectively. Additionally, misinformation and psychological effects must be considered when evaluating the impact of social media on students' educational and career outcomes.

Word Cloud: Social Network Influence on Educational Continuation and Career Choice Fig 2: Review literature word cloud



Interpretation of the Word Cloud: Social Network Influence on Educational Continuation and Career Choice

Word cloud is a graphical representation of the most common themes about how social networks influence the pursuit of education and career paths. The larger words in the cloud are of higher frequency and relevance, whereas smaller words represent less frequent but important words. Most salient terms are Social, Career, Media, Network, and Decision-making, signalling the profound effects of digital media on students' scholarly and professional educational paths. Social networks allow students to explore their careers, to share knowledge and expertise, and to be involved professionally, upholding existing conceptions of social capital and professional development [21, 8].

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Terms such as Academic, Student, Retention, and Educational suggest that social media influences educational continuity among students in terms of peer support, professional advice, and e-learning. Terms such as Influence, Perception, and Expectations suggest that social media does not only inform but misshape career aspirations. This is consistent with evidence supporting the "highlight reel" effect, whereby idealized presentations breed unrealistic expectations and self-doubt [13].

The word cloud also captures significant characteristics of Misinformation, Bias, and Comparison, emphasizing the dual role of social media in empowering informed choice-making and spreading illusive career stories [44]. Second, the dominance of Microlearning, Knowledge, and Skill emphasizes how social media supports skill development, professional networks, and lifelong education [39].

As a whole, this visualization validates the complex interconnection between profession selection, education routes, and social networks. Although social media may provide good tips and profession advice, its influence must be carefully reviewed to prevent potential errors and bias.

Conclusion

The research discussed and the accompanying visual data collectively determine the complex and changing character of the role that is played by social media and online networks in determining students' educational outcomes and future careers. Whereas platforms such as LinkedIn, Twitter, and YouTube offer opportunities for academic interaction, professional networking, and skill acquisition, their effect is not trouble-free. The dissemination of thoughtfully selected information, the dissemination of misinformation, and the presence of algorithmic bias—most prevalent on platforms like Instagram and TikTok—can lead to skewed perceptions and unrealistic expectations regarding career trajectories.

Social capital is subsequently a central player in the decision-making process within careers, where broader and greater digital networks promote greater access to information and resources. Theoretical frameworks such as Social Cognitive Career Theory [20] and Super's Life-Span, [38] provide a foundation to understanding how self-efficacy, social support, and extended developmental processes all contribute to the development of careers.

Additionally, the findings point to the imperative of encouraging digital literacy among students. With the online sphere becoming increasingly central to career exploration, it is essential to equip students with the ability to critically evaluate digital sources, discern valid sources, and counter the influence of algorithmically improved biases.

Keeping these conclusions in mind, it is imperative that teachers, schools, and policy makers adopt a proactive role. This would mean integrating digital literacy and critical thinking into teaching curricula, ensuring equal access to professional networking, and developing interventions for meeting social media's psychological and information-related challenges. Only through adopting these collective efforts can the power of digital platforms be harnessed effectively and ethically for students' long-term academic and professional success.

Future Directions

Future studies should focus on how the negative impacts of social media on career beliefs and decision-making among students can be reversed. One area of focus is quantifying the role of digital literacy programs in helping students critique career content critically and distinguish between trustworthy sources. With digital platforms becoming increasingly complex, the issue of increasing transparency in algorithmic decision-making is another central concern. It requires research to explore

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the effect of algorithmic construction on visibility of content and if it perpetuates current socioeconomic differences and career myths.

Moreover, the rising influence of career influencers and learning sites also needs to be explored. Future research must analyze both the beneficial and negative effects these actors have on influencing students' aspirations and choices. Longitudinal research must also determine the effect of early exposure to career material through social media on students' actual careers in the long run.

In addition, the incorporation of social media literacy within formal education should be examined. Research would evaluate whether curricula integrating digital career counselling and critical media literacy are successful in effectively preparing students for the digital labour market's demands. Lastly, research would examine the psychological impacts of strategic success stories, specifically how overestimation of professional success affects students' self-esteem, motivation, and professional aspirations.

By investigating these interrelated disciplines, teachers, scholars, and policy-makers can work together to develop evidence-based, targeted interventions that will amplify the benefits of social media while limiting its maladies. Through these efforts, ultimately, students will be better enabled to make pragmatic, confident, and knowledgeable career choices in an increasingly digital world.

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