



Press Release

Lessons from Past Technopanics for Current Social Media Debates

PAULINA ENCK | OCTOBER 28, 2021

The [Wall Street Journal report](#) regarding Facebook’s internal research on the mental health impacts on its users, mainly teenage girls, has re-ignited the debate about the role social media plays in exacerbating mental health issues. In a new insight, Tech Policy Analyst Juan Londoño discusses the push for regulation of big tech as an example of a moral panic, where innovation is blamed for existing societal ills. Londoño contends that policymakers’ attempts to regulate these issues away often result in rigid policies that ignore the nuances of content moderation regarding other sensible topics, potentially eroding users’ privacy or reducing free expression online.

Key points:

- The current push for social media regulation is intended to mitigate the platforms’ impact on mental health issues, yet the concerns are largely fueled by information that was incomplete or taken out of context; current evidence shows its impact to be inconclusive and suggests that more research is needed.
- Some of these concerns, such as the potential impact of social media on teens and other vulnerable groups, are a natural phenomenon in the widespread adoption of novel technologies, as its changing application and a less tech-savvy user base often reveal unforeseen shortcomings.
- While there are real challenges that have arisen due to the novelty of these technologies, policymakers must be cautious not to fall prey to “technopanics” by passing highly disruptive legislation that could yield unintended consequences.

[Read the analysis](#)