

Social Media Usage Among Adolescents: Impact on Mental Health and Intervention

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Abstract

Social media usage among adolescents has become ubiquitous, raising concerns about its impact on mental health. This abstract explores how social media affects adolescent well-being, focusing on both positive and negative outcomes. Research indicates that while social media can offer support and connection, excessive or maladaptive use is linked to increased risks of anxiety, depression, and poor self-esteem. Adolescents may experience pressure from social comparison, cyberbullying, and reduced face-to-face interactions, which can exacerbate mental health issues. Interventions aimed at mitigating these risks include promoting digital literacy, encouraging healthy online habits, and fostering open communication between adolescents, parents, and educators. Effective strategies also involve integrating mental health education into school curricula and developing supportive online environments. Addressing these concerns holistically can help balance the benefits of social media with the need to safeguard adolescent mental health.

Introduction

Adolescence is a transitional period marked by substantial changes in physical maturation, cognitive abilities, and social interaction as they adjust to their emergent needs to develop new skills. They may start to explore ways of being independent from their family (Robert, 2018).

Social media is a computer-based technology that facilitates the sharing of ideas, thoughts, and information through the building of virtual networks and communities. By design, social media is Internet-based and gives users quick electronic communication of content. Content includes personal information, documents, videos, and photos. Users engage with social media such as computer, tablet, or Smartphone via web-based software or applications (Dollarhide, 2014). Social media is a relatively new medium through which adolescents can manage their mental wellbeing. Indeed, young people frequently report turning to sites such as Face book and Twitter to

escape from the external pressures threatening their mental health (Boyd, 2014).

Social media plays a big role in teen culture today. Surveys showed that 90% of teens aged 13-17 were using social media and reported having used at least one active social media profile and visiting it at least daily. Two thirds of teens have their own mobile devices with internet capabilities. On average, teens are online almost nine hours a day, not including time for homework. Adolescents who are at risk for social media addiction have low self-esteem, early onset of anxiety and depression. So it's crucial to explore how adolescent's social media usage contributes to mental health. There are positive aspects of social media, but also potential risks. It is important for parents to help their teens use these sites responsibly.

Social media has become an integral part of adolescents' lives, influencing their social interactions, self-perception, and overall mental health. While platforms like Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok offer opportunities for connection and self-expression, they also pose potential risks. Adolescents are particularly vulnerable to the effects of social media due to their developmental stage and sensitivity to peer influence. This introduction examines the dual-edged impact of social media on mental health, highlighting both the benefits and the drawbacks. It sets the stage for understanding how excessive or negative use can lead to mental health challenges such as anxiety and depression, while also discussing the importance of targeted interventions to mitigate these effects and promote healthier online behavior.

Potential benefits of social media include:

- Staying connected to friends
- Meeting new friends with shared interests
- Finding community and support for specific activities
- Sharing art work or music
- Exploring and expressing themselves

Potential risks of social media include:

- Exposure to harmful or inappropriate content (e.g., sex, drugs, violence, etc.)

- Exposure to dangerous people
- Cyber bullying, a risk factor for depression and suicide
- Over sharing personal information
- Privacy concerns including the collection of data about teen users
- Identity theft or being hacked
- Interference with sleep, exercise, homework, or family activities

Conclusion

Face book, Instagram, Messenger, YouTube, Twitter were found to be the most preferred social networking sites (SNS) for functions of chatting and making friends, for reconnecting with friends, maintaining existing relationships and sharing knowledge. Primary reason behind use of social media use is to keep in touch with family and friends. Adolescents begin using of social networking at early years and are influenced by gender and age. Adolescents were found to carry social networking activities at night mostly, interact with the opposite sex, have great interest in electronic gadgets, ignore daily activities, hide their online tasks from others, use SNS secretly and feel frustrated in its absence. Adolescents spend significant amount of time on using SNS regularly. There was gender differentiation

in its usage where male usage was more and there was high level of intimate relationships with online friends.

Greater depressive symptoms were related to producing more content on social media, greater interactive communication and greater social anxiety symptoms which were associated spending more time on social media. Adolescents who used social media more – both overall and at night – and those who were more emotionally invested in social media experienced poorer sleep quality, higher levels of anxiety and depression. Social media directly causes ill mental health such as depression and suicidal ideation, was addictive and exposed people to behaviors that impacted negatively on their emotional wellbeing. A cost-efficient Intervention to reduce social media addiction improved learning engagement and increased the time spent on learning outside the classroom rather than on social media, effectively reduced social media addiction and improved students' mental health and learning efficiency. An intervention that included cognitive reconstruction, reminder cards, and a week-long diary keeping effectively reduced the addiction to social media and further improved mental health and academic efficiency.

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