

Reversing the detrimental impacts of excessive social media usage on teenage mental health: an extensive investigation

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Abstract

In this digital age, more and more teens are now using social media. The impact of social media on adolescent mental health is one of the current topics of research. Researchers have found the progress of social media for adolescents, however, a series of problems of passive socialization still exists research lacks a unified explanation.

The topic of this paper is adolescent mental health and the impact of social media. The research methodology of this paper is as follows: summarizing and analyzing the literature on the internet and collating the data from the different literature websites and putting it into this article. Many adolescents are influenced by these social media and thus suffer from mental illness. Finally, this chapter provides a comprehensive review of existing research, points out the shortcomings of the current stage of research, and suggests possible future research directions and trends. This chapter is intended to serve as a reference for researchers in the field of the impact of social media on adolescents and to provide some ideas and suggestions for subsequent research.

Keywords: Social media; Adolescent mental health; Digital age;

I. Introduction

In recent years, there has been a lot of focus on the effects of social media on teenagers, and scholars are beginning to acknowledge the significance and urgency of this problem. Teenagers' use of social media should be given greater attention since the usage of social media has increased, with millions of people using sites like Facebook and Instagram. However, studying how social media affects teenagers poses a number of difficult and varied problems for academics.

The topic of teenage mental health has seen much study and studies by several academics. In their survey on adolescent mental health, for instance, Zhang and Yu noted that social media has an impact on adolescents' mental health and that many of them experience anxiety, depression, Internet addiction, poor sleep, and other illnesses (Zhang and Yu, 2021). According to the poll, 85% of eighth students currently own a cell phone, and 93% of eleventh graders do the same (Zhang and Yu, 2021). This decrease in the age range of teens in terms of media consumption was mentioned many times. From this data, this article can see that nowadays the use of smart phones is so widespread that it has penetrated into every aspect of life worldwide, which undoubtedly brings a lot of convenience to life, but at the same time, it also causes a lot of negative impacts. Teenagers have not yet entered the society, do not know how to control themselves, do not know how to resist the temptation, thus stepping into some bad information.

Despite the significant progress that has been made on the impact of adolescents' use of social media on their mental health, there are still many unanswered questions. For example, the root of the problem of how to effectively reduce adolescents' ability to distinguish between good and bad information on the Internet is still unclear, and the validity of qualitative and quantitative research methods still needs to be further investigated. In addition, there are still many problems that need to be solved in the course of the research. Therefore, this paper aims to comprehensively understand the current status and development of adolescent mental health research, identify deficiencies in current research, and provide references and directions for future research by systematically combing and comprehensively on adolescent mental health issues the social media field at home and abroad.

The dangers of social media

The advent of social media has fundamentally changed how we connect, communicate, and share information. However, the impact that social media has on teens' mental health has become a very concerning topic for a number of stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and researchers. Recent studies conducted by

academic specialists have brought attention to the generally negative effects that social media might have on young people's psychological well-being (Bao et al., 2022).

The results of these research show that teens' developmental milestones might be considerably impacted by early and continuous exposure to social media settings. It has been observed that a growing number of young people are avoiding the classic childhood experiences in favor of the allure of social media platforms. Rather than participating in physical activities, sports, or direct social engagements with their peers, they are more and more attracted to the digital realm, where they can stay in touch via their smartphones (Zhang and Yu, 2021).

This behavioral change has given rise to an alarming pattern of passive social engagement among the youth. Many young individuals are now choosing to spend their time passively consuming social media content, playing digital games, or partaking in online conversations, instead of engaging in social activities that necessitate the cultivation of social competencies. This type of interaction, characterized by its sedentary and solitary nature, can hinder the organic development of social abilities that are vital for personal maturation and emotional acuity (Bao et al., 2022).

The broader consequences of this trend are profound. Teenagers who devote an inordinate amount of time to social media risk losing out on the valuable developmental experiences that arise from interacting with friends, joining group endeavors, and mastering the intricacies of social interactions. Such experiences are indispensable for nurturing self-assurance, compassion, and proficient communication skills.

Additionally, the digital essence of social media can frequently result in a skewed self perception and unrealistic expectations regarding social relationships. The selective and polished content that young people are exposed to can propagate an illusory standard of flawlessness, which can trigger sentiments of insufficiency and social comparison, potentially intensifying pre-existing mental health challenges like anxiety and depression. Moreover, the absence of direct, in-person interactions may lead to a diminished sense of community and a feeling of not belonging. Adolescents might find it difficult to establish profound and significant relationships with their contemporaries, a situation that can result in social isolation and a dearth of support during pivotal developmental stages (Bao et al., 2022).

To sum up, while social media provides an avenue for connection and the dissemination of knowledge, it is imperative to acknowledge and counteract its potential adverse impacts on the mental health of teenagers. It is essential for parents, educators, and those in positions of policymaking to advocate for a balanced approach to technology use and to inspire teenagers to participate in a diverse array of social engagements that encourage the growth of vital life skills and emotional health.

Analysis on the Problems

Psychological Factors Influencing Passive Social Media Use

In 2018, Zhang et al. demonstrated a number of complex psychological elements that contribute to people's passive use of social media. Among the emotional and social factors that drive human activity are social motivation, approbation motivation, and FOMO (Zhang et al., 2023). To prevent feeling excluded from FOMO, they just utilize social media constantly. The platforms assist in achieving this goal by doing this, but doing so typically results in less active or engaging material being consumed (Zhang et al., 2023). According to Chen et al. (2019), there is a discernible variation in the personality attributes among their consumptions. To illustrate, those who are more introverted may find it easier to stand on the sidelines and watch people chat, while those with social anxiety might find this method more natural. Perfectionists may take the passive road to avoid the dangers of active engagement. These traits are intertwined with the impact social media has on individual mental health. Those whose personality profiles consist of traits that make them more prone to passive engagement might find themselves spending more time on social media instead of having real-life conversations with friends and family.

Inactivity on social media leads to significant effects on one's mental health. Over time, these effects can make their way into an individual's reality as symptoms such as isolation, worthlessness, and low self-esteem. Forcing users to witness only the most impressive moments of other users' lives leads to users feeling inferior and having inaccurate presumptions about what life is. This is a major issue with vulnerable demographics such as teenagers and young adults, for it creates intense emotions of difference and uselessness. Additionally, mental health is added to the list because the lack of active participation and genuine human communication leaves one feeling empty and dissatisfied.

Technological and Design Influences on Social Media

The technological and design aspects of a platform have a significant impact on user behavior when it comes to passive social media involvement. These characteristics have an impact on people's level of social media involvement.

The significance of social media design and algorithms in influencing and comprehending user behavior was highlighted by Krause and colleagues' investigation (Greenspoon and Saklofske, 2001). They

evaluate how technology and design affect passive usage of social media. These platforms are tailored using algorithms and were created especially to encourage user interaction. By algorithmically analyzing their data points to create the ideal content, the aim is to satisfy users and keep them mindlessly engaged. There aren't many platforms that people want to spend hours on or continue using. Instead, people become hooked on scrolling through feeds and passively grazing. Good platforms will manipulate subtly, changing people's behavior with the slow addition of "notification" features that improve passive uses of the site. Good platforms use sophisticated algorithms that manipulate and predict people into long periods of passive browsing.

The "infinite scroll" module, which is widely used and deeply ingrained across many platforms, is one of the most obvious design features that lowers user engagement. The material flows naturally between paragraphs, adhering to the feature's structure. People may unintentionally waste more time without realizing it if fresh stuff is constantly added while they browse. Additionally, such a structure creates "engagement traps" in addition to economically stimulating your interest and want to continue. These traps use dishonest methods to engage people without their explicit participation, based on auto-play movies and suggested material. Because there is no clear exit mechanism presented in the application, people would prefer aimless browsing for an extended period of time. Notifications and alerts are social media design musts that trigger a passive act.

Sociocultural Influences on Passive Social Media Use

A more sophisticated framework for understanding how social media shapes people's ideas and actions is required in order to fully appreciate these cultural and sociological ramifications. People are increasingly interacting with cultural content—such as music, art, and entertainment—on platforms. In contrast to earlier times when one had to locate and choose their culture, consumers now engage with culture in a totally different way by consuming this information through algorithms. Additionally, social media just presents broader cultural narratives and trends for users to passively absorb. A person's preferences, attitudes, and identity formation can be significantly influenced by how they "do" culture in an era of widely accessible media and, consequently, an apparently limitless variety of cultures and ideas. The research done by Yuna et al., (2022) highlights that social media platforms are an important homestead for news, amusement, and social interaction in contemporary society (Yuna et al., 2022). The ambition to stay connected and well-informed at all times influences user behavior and fits societal expectations.

The chapter highlights the ability of platforms to enable cross-cultural communication and examines the intricate relationship among cultural psychology and neuroscience. Users usually have a curious desire to be notified about the continuous stream of information, which yields an intense bias in the direction of consuming social media content passively. Yuna and friends attempt to highlight the far reaching impact of social media in modern society and its cardinal role in disseminating and preserving cultural norms and ideas (Yuna et al., 2022). The paper sets out to discuss how passive participation in social media shapes acceptance and reinforcement of cultural norms, especially amid a varied user demographic (Yuna et al., 2022).

Analysis of means to address the hazards of social media

Establish clear time limits for use

This problem can be solved in a variety of ways. In order to provide teens more time for socializing and outdoor activities, we may first advise parents to establish explicit time limitations for the usage of any electronic devices. In addition to encouraging them to become more reliant on real life, make new friends there, strengthen their existing connections, and be healthier, this will enable them to be more involved in real life as opposed to online.

To ensure that they set an example and that their kids are more likely to adhere to the time they have set for using gadgets, parents must monitor their own social media usage. Yet, simply doing this is insufficient. Parents need to make sure that they follow their own clear rules about using electronics and don't be the ones who don't give up on their own goals, so that their children will be more motivated to follow the rules set by their parents (Anderer, 2024).

Alternatively, parents can work with their children to set rules for using electronic devices, such as only using them for a certain number of hours per day or prohibiting their use during specific time periods. Parents can also ensure that their children have a sleep environment free of electronic distractions by setting up a shared family charging station that collects all electronic devices after a set time in the evening. Within the family, activities that do not rely on electronic devices, such as reading, puzzles and crafts, can be arranged to enrich the child's entertainment. In addition, parents can help their children develop the habit of self-control by discussing the pros and cons of electronic devices with them and educating them on how to use these devices wisely (Anderer, 2024).

Advocacy on media literacy and mental health education

Second, education and exposure can help teach kids to surf less. Schools may implement media literacy programs to educate kids how to spot misinformation, think critically, and use social media responsibly.

Students should be taught to differentiate between good and bad in this way since many people today employ online scams to defraud others of their money, which leads to many families becoming bankrupt and being split up. Simultaneously, a lot of online indications that encourage flaunting their money and make students feel inferior will be lessened, and more will be done to motivate them to go forward in order to accomplish this aim (Roten et al., 2021).

Furthermore, schools can also incorporate mental health education into the curriculum to help students recognise that social media can have a negative impact on mental health and provide coping strategies. In many Canadian provinces, mental health education is already part of the school curriculum. For example, elementary and secondary schools in Ontario have special mental health programmes that cover topics such as emotion management, stress relief, positive thinking exercises and healthy lifestyles. From this case, we can see that incorporating mental health education into the school curriculum is helpful to the mental health of young people, and students can learn how to manage their emotions and make themselves better.

Lastly, families, schools and the community need to work closely together to keep an eye on the Internet usage of young people. Schools can organise regular talks for parents to share information on how to manage the time and methods of their children's use of electronic devices (Roten et al., 2021). Schools can organise regular talks for parents to share how to manage their children's time and methods of using electronic devices. Social organisations can provide psychological counselling and support services to help young people and their families cope with problems arising from Internet use.

Encouraging interest in outdoor activities and building support networks

Thirdly, it is possible to promote interest development and outdoor activities. To lessen their dependency on social media, communities and schools should also plan more extracurricular activities and encourage students to join interest groups like sports and the arts. Teenagers will be more focused on making new friends so they can go out together. They may also be more inclined to participate in extracurricular activities like athletics, going for a run, playing badminton, etc. In addition to strengthening their bonds with one another, this will enhance the community's culture (Xue, 2010).

Not only sports, but teenagers can also do some art activities, such as painting, they can go out sketching and observe the nature. A report shows that staying in the park for 20 minutes a day can make them feel better and more integrated into nature, and they can also take the opportunity to learn about plants and what plants can better provide carbon dioxide, etc. From these aspects, we can see that in fact, encouraging outdoor activities and cultivating their interests is also a way to make teenagers have less contact with the Internet and to reduce their psychological problems. A way to reduce their exposure to the Internet and psychological problems (Wu and Tao, 2020).

Meanwhile, building a support network is also an aspect of getting children to use fewer social media. Creating a support network of parents and educators to share experiences and strategies to face and solve problems together, by sharing experiences and strategies, parents and educators can face and solve problems together to create a healthy environment for growing up. Organising regular parent meetings to discuss experiences and challenges regarding their children's use of social media can be opened up. Parents can share their methods and strategies, such as monitoring their children's online activities and guiding them to engage in other beneficial activities.

Teachers and educators may also receive training and workshops on the effects of social media to help them identify and address students' online addictions and learn how to integrate pertinent mental health education materials into the classroom. It is possible to create social media groups or online forums where parents and educators may ask questions, give ideas, and exchange information. Schools or community-based organizations might oversee these platforms to guarantee the dependability and correctness of the data (Wu and Tao, 2020).

In the United States, there is a Co-Parenting programme. This programme encourages parents and schools to work together to share parenting experiences and strategies. Parents meet regularly to discuss how to limit their children's screen time and work together to set family rules, such as an hour of "screen-free time" each day and outdoor activities for the whole family (Roten et al., 2021).

Formulation of relevant laws and regulations and platform responsibilities

Last but not least, there are also extremely strict rules and restrictions. The management of minors on social media platforms can be regulated by government agencies via the designation and implementation of laws and regulations. For instance, a number of games in China are restricted to players who are at least eighteen years old, and they use face recognition and real-name identification to verify that players are in person (Tirumalaraju et al., 2020).

Many kids may spend less time playing devices and have less worry when it comes to gaming as a result of policies like these. A decline in self-esteem and an elevated risk of anxiety and depression can result from frequent gaming failures or fails to reach desired goals. When they lose a video game, many teenagers experience anxiety episodes throughout the day. This can lead to them being more dependent on video games and not taking their academics properly. Additionally, video game addiction causes social isolation in teenagers and adults by reducing their engagement with friends, family, and classmates. Depression and anxiety may be brought on by this seclusion.

Not only that, but playing games for long periods of time, especially at night, can lead to sleep deprivation and reduced sleep quality. Sleep deprivation not only affects daily performance, but also exacerbates psychological problems such as anxiety and depression, and excessive gaming can interfere with the normal sleep-wake cycle, leading to disruption of the biological clock (Lim et al., 2019; Du and Wang, 2015).

Physical health problems can also occur, for example, sedentary sitting in front of a computer or gaming console for long periods of time can lead to physical health problems such as obesity, vision loss and musculoskeletal problems, which indirectly affect mental health. There are also changes in eating and exercise habits, as addicted gamers tend to neglect healthy eating and exercise, further exacerbating physical and mental health problems.

For young people, if they are addicted to gaming, they are likely to neglect their studies, leading to a decline in academic performance, which can affect their future education and development (Liao, 2016).

II. Conclusion

In conclusion, a thorough and multidimensional strategy is needed to address the detrimental effects of social media on teenage mental health. By establishing explicit time restrictions for the use of electronic devices and modeling acceptable behavior themselves, parents play a critical role. Education is essential. To inform pupils about the risks of social media and offer coping mechanisms, schools are introducing media literacy programs and mental health education into the curriculum. Teenagers' dependence on social media may be lessened by promoting outdoor recreation and interest development, which will promote better interpersonal relationships and personal development.

In addition, building support networks for parents and educators through regular meetings and training workshops can provide valuable resources and strategies for managing children's use of social media. Schools can organise talks for parents to share information on how to effectively manage their children's time and methods of using electronic devices. Meanwhile, social organisations can provide counselling and support services to help young people and their families cope with problems arising from Internet use.

Finally, government policies and regulations restricting minors' access to social media and gaming platforms can significantly reduce screen time and its associated negative impacts. Governments can introduce policies to limit objectionable advertisements and content targeting youth to protect their physical and mental health. In addition, media platforms can optimise algorithms to reduce the spread of undesirable content while increasing content that is beneficial to the physical and mental health of youth.

By taking these measures, this study can help young people develop healthier habits, enhance their social skills and improve their overall well-being. Establishing a healthy and balanced environment for Internet use will not only contribute to the development of young people's mental health, but also lay a solid foundation for their future growth and success.

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