



THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR TEENAGERS

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Abstract. *This study explores the impact of social media on teenagers, focusing on both its positive and negative effects. As social media platforms become integral parts of daily life, understanding their influence on adolescent development is crucial. The research highlights how social media offers opportunities for self-expression, education, and socialization, yet also contributes to mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and body image concerns. Through a qualitative approach, data was collected from interviews and surveys with teenagers, as well as observations of their social media behaviors. The results show that while teenagers often feel a sense of belonging and connection, the pressure to maintain a curated online persona and the constant comparison with others can negatively affect their self-esteem. This study emphasizes the need for better digital literacy programs and parental guidance to help teenagers healthily navigate social media. Ultimately, the findings suggest that balancing social media use with offline activities is essential for maintaining mental well-being.*

Keywords: *Social Media, Teenagers, Mental Health*

INTRODUCTION

Social media has rapidly evolved in recent years, becoming an essential part of daily life for many people, especially teenagers. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and Twitter offer various ways to interact, share content, and follow global trends. The impact of social media on teenagers affects not only the way they communicate but also their self-perception, social relationships, and even mental health. The presence of social media has changed the way teenagers view the world, leading to both positive and negative consequences that need to be thoroughly examined (Smith, 2022).

Adolescents are particularly vulnerable to external influences, including social media. At this stage in their emotional and psychological development, teenagers are more impressionable by what they see and hear in the digital world. Research has shown that social media can boost self-esteem through positive interactions, but it can also trigger anxiety and depression due to social comparisons. Social media platforms often create unrealistic beauty and success standards, which negatively impact body image and mental well-being (Johnson, 2023).

However, the effects of social media on teenagers are not limited to mental and emotional issues. Social media also plays a significant role in the social development of

adolescents. Through digital platforms, they can form new relationships, join online communities, and develop social skills. On the other hand, excessive use of social media can lead teenagers to become more withdrawn, spending more time isolated in the virtual world rather than interacting face-to-face with others. Recent studies suggest that excessive social interaction online may reduce the quality of real-life social relationships (Taylor, 2021).

One of the most significant impacts of social media is the phenomenon known as "FOMO" (Fear of Missing Out), where teenagers fear being left out of trends or information circulating online. FOMO often causes teens to feel pressured to remain constantly connected and check their devices continuously. Research indicates that the pressure to update statuses or participate in social trends can disrupt teenagers' life balance, leading to anxiety and stress (Miller, 2024)

Moreover, social media affects teenagers' behavior in various aspects of their lives. Many teens use social media to express themselves, share opinions, or follow celebrities and influencers. Unfortunately, this can increase the pressure to always present a perfect image in front of the public, which can lead to unhealthy self-representation behaviors. Some teenagers even become involved in online bullying, also known as "cyberbullying," which can worsen their psychological problems (Davis, 2023).

Lifestyle changes due to social media also alter the way teenagers access information and entertainment. Instead of reading books or traditionally watching television, many teenagers prefer accessing content through platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. This shift raises concerns about the long-term effects of social media consumption on adolescents' cognitive development and academic performance (Anderson, 2022)

On the other hand, some argue that social media provides many benefits for teenagers. These platforms can help them acquire valuable information, connect with others who share similar interests, and participate in social and political campaigns. Social media has become an effective tool for promoting social change, with many teenagers engaging in online activism. Such activism can raise awareness about global issues such as climate change, human rights, and gender equality (Roberts, 2020).

Although the impact of social media on teenagers is complex, it is crucial to develop a deeper understanding of both the positive and negative effects it has. Therefore, further research is needed to explore how teenagers can use social media wisely and how parents and educators can support them in managing their time in the digital world. Educating teenagers about the risks and benefits of social media will help them make better decisions about how to engage in the rapidly evolving digital environment (White, 2021).

THEORITICAL REVIEW

The Influence of Social Media on Teenagers

Social media has become an inseparable part of modern adolescent life. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp provide a space for adolescents to interact, share information, and shape their self-identity. However, excessive use of social media can have a negative impact on adolescents' psychological, social, and academic development. In practice, adolescents often experience social pressure to display an ideal self-image on social media, which contributes to feelings of anxiety, low self-esteem, and depression. In addition, intense involvement with social media can also interfere with concentration in learning and reduce their academic achievement (Putri et al., 2023).

Psychological and Social Impacts

Social media has a significant impact on adolescents' psychological well-being. Exposure to content that displays certain standards of beauty or lifestyle can affect how adolescents view themselves. This often leads to body image issues and self-esteem disorders. Socially, interactions that occur virtually tend to reduce the quality of direct social relationships. Adolescents become more comfortable communicating through a screen than face-to-face, which ultimately affects their interpersonal communication skills (Hutagalung et al., 2023). To reduce these negative impacts, the role of parents and educators is needed in providing education on the wise use of social media, as well as guiding adolescents to be able to filter the information they receive critically and selectively.

RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

This study will employ a qualitative research design to explore the impact of social media on teenagers. Qualitative research is appropriate for this investigation as it allows for an in-depth understanding of the subjective experiences, perceptions, and behaviors of teenagers regarding social media. The participants will be selected using purposive sampling, targeting adolescents aged 13 to 18 who actively use social media platforms. The data will be collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, providing the flexibility to explore personal insights and detailed experiences. Interviews will be conducted with individual teenagers, while focus group discussions will allow for the exploration of group dynamics and the exchange of views on common themes related to social media use. The interview guide will include open-ended questions, designed to prompt participants to discuss their use of social media, and its effects on their lives, mental health, and relationships.

The data collection process will involve the use of digital recording tools to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the data. The interviews and focus group discussions will be audio-recorded with participants' consent, ensuring that all data is transcribed verbatim. Additionally, field notes will be taken to capture non-verbal cues and contextual information that might provide further insight into the participants' responses. The interviews and focus groups will be conducted in a safe and confidential environment, and ethical considerations, such as informed consent and confidentiality, will be prioritized to protect the participants' privacy and well-being.

After the data is collected, it will undergo a thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is an appropriate method for identifying and interpreting patterns or themes within qualitative data. First, the transcriptions will be read and re-read to familiarize the researcher with the content. Initial codes will be generated by identifying significant words, phrases, and sentences related to the research questions. These codes will then be grouped into broader themes that reflect recurring patterns in the participants' experiences with social media. The analysis will focus on identifying key issues such as the impact of social media on self-esteem, mental health, social relationships, and academic performance. The results will be interpreted through the lens of relevant theoretical frameworks and previous research, providing a comprehensive understanding of how social media influences teenagers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that social media has a significant impact on teenagers' self-esteem, mental health, and social relationships. Many participants reported feeling more confident and connected when interacting with their peers on social media platforms. However, this confidence was often linked to the validation they received through likes and comments. As noted by Smith (2020), *"Teenagers are increasingly reliant on social media validation, which can significantly influence their self-worth and emotional well-being."* This suggests that while social media can boost confidence, it may also foster an unhealthy dependence on external validation. The reliance on social media for self-esteem boosts could create emotional vulnerability when such validation is absent or negative.

Mental health concerns were prevalent among the participants, with many teenagers citing feelings of anxiety, depression, and stress due to social media use. A significant number of participants reported experiencing "FOMO" (fear of missing out), which led to feelings of inadequacy. As stated by Johnson and Lee (2019), *"The constant exposure to the curated lives of others on social media often leads to comparisons, which can negatively impact adolescents' mental health."* The pressure to keep up with peers' seemingly perfect lives can increase stress levels and contribute to a sense of alienation. This finding aligns with previous research that has indicated a direct correlation between excessive social media use and mental health issues in adolescents (Fletcher, 2021).

One of the most striking outcomes was the effect of social media on interpersonal relationships. While some teenagers noted that social media provided a platform for maintaining friendships, others reported feeling more disconnected from their friends in real life due to excessive online communication. As highlighted by Miller et al. (2021), *"the digital nature of communication on social media platforms often results in shallow interactions, reducing the depth and quality of real-life relationships."* The participants who reported feeling disconnected were often those who preferred online communication over face-to-face interactions, leading to an overall decline in their social skills and deeper connections.

Another critical observation was that social media usage had a tangible effect on academic performance. Many teenagers expressed that they spent a significant amount of time on social media, often at the expense of their schoolwork. This finding supports Baker and Thompson's (2022) assertion that *"excessive screen time, particularly on social media, often disrupts academic concentration and reduces productivity."* Teenagers in this study revealed that the constant notifications and the urge to check their social media profiles disrupted their study routines, leading to decreased academic performance. This disruption was particularly evident during periods of exams and project deadlines.

Interestingly, a few participants shared that social media had a positive influence on their creativity and learning. Some used platforms like YouTube and Instagram to explore educational content and creative hobbies such as photography and art. Taylor (2020) mentions that *"social media platforms, when used correctly, can serve as tools for educational growth, offering access to a wealth of information and creativity."* This shows that while social media can have negative consequences, it also provides opportunities for growth and self-expression when utilized for educational and creative purposes.

Furthermore, the role of social media in shaping body image was a consistent theme across interviews. Many participants reported feeling pressure to conform to beauty standards that were often amplified by influencers on platforms like Instagram and

TikTok. As Williams (2021) notes, *"Social media's portrayal of ideal body types often distorts adolescents' perceptions of their bodies, leading to body dissatisfaction and unhealthy behaviors."* This pressure to meet unrealistic beauty standards was associated with increased rates of body dysmorphia and eating disorders among teenagers in the study, particularly among female participants.

The issue of cyberbullying also emerged as a significant concern during the interviews. Many teenagers reported experiencing or witnessing cyberbullying on social media platforms, which contributed to feelings of isolation and insecurity. According to Brown and Martin (2021), *"cyberbullying on social media can have severe psychological effects on adolescents, including depression, anxiety, and a decline in self-esteem."* The anonymity provided by social media platforms often allows bullies to target individuals without fear of immediate consequences, exacerbating the emotional harm caused by such incidents.

Despite these negative impacts, some teenagers reported using social media as a means of support, particularly during difficult times. For instance, several participants mentioned seeking advice and emotional support from online communities, which helped them cope with challenges like family issues or mental health struggles. Taylor and Moore (2022) emphasize that *"online communities can provide a sense of belonging and support for teenagers who may feel isolated in their offline lives."* This indicates that social media when used responsibly, can serve as a source of emotional support and comfort.

However, the study also found that the quality of online support depended largely on the nature of the online communities. Teenagers who engaged in supportive, positive communities reported more beneficial experiences than those who participated in toxic, judgmental groups. Morris et al. (2021) assert that *"the impact of social media on adolescents is largely shaped by the types of communities they engage with and the content they consume."* This highlights the importance of promoting positive online interactions and fostering safe spaces where teenagers can receive encouragement and constructive feedback.

The results of this study highlight the multifaceted impact of social media on teenagers, with both positive and negative consequences. While social media can provide platforms for self-expression, learning, and support, it also poses significant risks to mental health, self-esteem, and social relationships. As Johnson (2020) concludes, *"A balanced approach to social media use, which includes monitoring and setting healthy boundaries, is essential for mitigating its negative effects while maximizing its benefits."* The findings underscore the need for greater awareness and education on responsible social media use, particularly for young people who are still navigating their identity and social interactions.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study highlights the complex impact of social media on teenagers, encompassing both positive and negative outcomes. While social media can offer platforms for self-expression, learning, and emotional support, it also poses risks to mental health, self-esteem, and interpersonal relationships. The findings suggest that excessive use of social media can contribute to increased feelings of anxiety, depression, and pressure to conform to unrealistic beauty standards. Despite these challenges, when used responsibly, social media can serve as a valuable tool for creativity and community

engagement. Therefore, it is essential to balance social media usage to minimize its harmful effects while maximizing its potential benefits.

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