

Counteracting the negative effects of social media overuse on adolescent mental health: a comprehensive study

Xinyin Liang*

Abbey Cambridge College, Cambridge, CB2 8EB, UK

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 paper 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 paper 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.

1 Introduction

The impact of social media on adolescents has received a lot of attention in recent years, and researchers are gradually recognising the importance and urgency of the issue of social media's impact on adolescents. As the use of social media has become more widespread, with millions of users of various social media, such as Instagram and Facebook, the issue of teenagers' use of social media should be taken more seriously. However, researching the impact of social media on adolescents presents researchers with many challenges of complexity and diversity.

Many scholars have conducted investigations and a lot of research in the field of adolescent mental health. For example, two scholars, YongChang Zhang and Hao Yu, published a survey on the mental health of adolescents, in which they pointed out that social media affects the mental health of adolescents, and many adolescents suffer from depression, anxiety, Internet addiction, sleep quality and other diseases [1].

More than one point was made about the lowering of the age range of teenagers in terms of media use, and according to the survey, we can see that 85% of 8th graders now own a mobile phone, increasing to 93% in 11th grade [1]. From this data, this article can see that

* Corresponding author: jiaofeng@ldy.edu.rs

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.

2 The dangers of social media

The emergence of social media has completely transformed our methods of communication, interaction, and information dissemination. However, the influence that social media wields over the mental health of teenagers has emerged as a deeply troubling issue for a variety of stakeholders, including educators, parents, and scientific investigators. Recent scholarly research led by academic experts has highlighted the largely adverse consequences that social media can have on the psychological state of young individuals [2].

The findings from these studies indicate that prolonged and early immersion in social media environments can significantly affect the developmental milestones of teenagers. It has been noted that an increasing number of young people are forgoing the quintessential experiences of childhood, lured instead by the enchantment 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 [1].

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 [2].

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 [2].

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.

3 Analysis of means to address the hazards of social media

3.1 Establish clear time limits for use

There are a number of ways to address this issue. Firstly, we can ask parents to set clear time limits for the use of all electronic devices, so that teenagers have more time for outdoor activities and social interactions. This will allow them to be more engaged in real life rather than online and will also encourage them to become more dependent on real life, to gain new friends in real life, to promote their relationships, and to be healthier.

However, it's not enough to just do this, parents need to set an example, parents need to manage their own social media time to make sure that they set an example and that their children are more able to comply with the time they have set for using electronics. 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 [3].

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 [3].

3.2 Advocacy on media literacy and mental health education

Secondly, children can be taught to surf less through education and publicity. Schools can start media literacy programmes to teach students how to identify false information, use critical thinking and think about the proper use of social media. Nowadays, there are many people who use online scams to cheat money, causing many families to go bankrupt and be separated, so students should be taught to distinguish right from wrong in this way. At the same time, many of the indicators on the Internet that promote showing off their wealth and make students feel inferior will also be reduced, and more to encourage them to make progress to achieve this goal [4].

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 [4]. 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.

3.3 Encouraging interest in outdoor activities and building support networks

Thirdly, outdoor activities and interest development can be encouraged. Communities and schools can also organise more extracurricular activities and encourage schoolchildren to participate in interest groups such as sports and arts, so as to reduce their reliance on social media. In this way, teenagers will be more focused on more friends to go out together, they may also together the better together to do some extracurricular activities, such as sports together, about to go running, play badminton, etc. This will help them to bond with each other and it will also help to enrich the culture of the community [5].

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 [5, 6].

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.

Training and workshops for teachers and educators on the impact of social media can also be set up to give them an understanding of how to recognise and respond to students' online addictions and to teach them how to incorporate relevant mental health education content in the classroom. Online forums or social media groups can be set up where parents and educators can exchange information, ask questions and share advice. These platforms can be managed by schools or community-based organisations to ensure the accuracy and reliability of information [6].

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 [4].

3.4 Formulation of relevant laws and regulations and platform responsibilities

Finally, there is also a very extreme approach of policies and regulations. Government departments can designate and implement laws and regulations to protect young people and regulate the management of underage users on social media platforms. For example, there are several games in China that cannot be played by anyone under the age of 18, and which require real-name authentication and facial recognition to determine if they are in person [7].

Policies like these can cause many teenagers to spend less time playing electronics and reduce their anxiety about gaming. Frequent gaming failures or failures to achieve desired goals can lead to a decrease in self-esteem and an increased risk of anxiety and depression. Many teens will have anxiety attacks throughout the day because they don't win a video game, and these things may cause them to not take their studies seriously in school and make them more addicted to video games. Also, teens and adults who are addicted to video games tend to have less interaction with family, friends and classmates, leading to social isolation. This isolation can trigger anxiety and depression.

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 [8, 9].

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 [7, 10].

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, addressing the negative impact of social media on adolescent mental health requires a comprehensive and multifaceted approach. Parents play a crucial role by setting clear time limits for electronic device usage and modeling appropriate behaviour themselves. Education is key, with schools implementing media literacy programs and incorporating mental health education into the curriculum to teach students about the dangers of social media and provide coping strategies. Encouraging outdoor activities and interest development can reduce adolescents' reliance on social media, fostering healthier social interactions and personal growth.

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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