

EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE MENTAL HEALTH OF TEENS

Yashica Somani

Birla Vidya Niketan, New Delhi

DOI: 10.46609/IJSSER.2023.v08i05.016 URL: <https://doi.org/10.46609/IJSSER.2023.v08i05.016>

Received: 15 May 2023 / Accepted: 24 May 2023 / Published: 31 May 2023

ABSTRACT

This research paper focuses on the various effects that social media might have on the mental health of the teens of this generation. It is an overview of the different complications and detrimental effects that can be caused by social media if misused and overused. We will be talking about how, because of social media, so many children and teens are becoming a prey to a host of various mental illnesses and how this is deteriorating their concentration levels and messing up with their sleeping patterns. This research paper also talks about how social media can be used in a productive manner rather than in a wasteful way and how taking a detox from this unhealthy addiction can be beneficial for us in the long run. At the end of our findings, we will finally be able to conclude the paper by emphasizing the importance of our mental health and what we can do to keep our mind happy and free from all the toxicity of social media.

Keywords: mental health, social media, addiction.

Is Social Media A Boon Or A Bane?

Social media is a virtual community which allows people to interact with each other from across the world. This platform helps people to share their experiences and journeys, create content which they are passionate about, start new businesses online and a whole lot more.

Apps like Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat and Twitter can help people connect with new individuals from around the world and nurture new relationships. Social Media can be very beneficial if used in the right manner and in moderation but as fascinating as this might sound, social media can also have a very detrimental impact on our mental health if misused.

The new generation or Gen Z as we call it, has gotten severely addicted to the use of social media to a point where it has started to deteriorate the minds of young teens causing various complications like mood related disorders, body dysmorphia, eating disorders, lower levels of concentration in academics, anxiety and various others. Thus if carelessly used, social media can

become a bane rather than a boon.

The Various Ways In Which Social Media Is Destroying The Youth Mentally!

Social media is a vast platform which gives exposure to all kinds of information to young teens. It is a dangerous type of addiction which has made the youth hooked onto it and thus they spend most of their valuable time scrolling through different apps and surfing through different sites because of which children have stopped socializing with each other physically which further hampers their communication skills. In the long run, this will make children antisocial which may also lead to social anxiety.

Young adolescents also tend to compare themselves to the people they see online. Social media influencers and celebrities set unrealistic beauty standards which makes their young audience feel insecure about themselves and causes low self esteem. Their feed might be full of these influencers who portray themselves as being “perfect” all the time, this can trigger obsessive thoughts among teens relating to their appearance and can also be a constant reminder of their perceived flaws.

Prolonged media exposure is a huge reason for the generation of various disorders among teens. Young boys and girls pay too much emphasis on their body image during these tender years and seeing images and videos of supermodels and influencers who are known for having a “perfect body”, may cause them to compare themselves to these public figures which further leads to body related disorders like eating disorders and body dysmorphia. A recent study proclaimed that most teens would go to any lengths and adapt any means to achieve the desired body they see on the internet, causing them to indulge in life threatening practices like over exercising and cutting out their food intake.

Multiple studies have also found that there exists a link between social media usage and depression, anxiety and even suicidal thoughts. The people on social media glamorize their life to an extent that the people on the other side of the phone, who are viewing this type of content, start feeling dissatisfied with their own life and have a fear of missing out. These negative experiences can adversely affect one’s mood and they may start cribbing about their own life.

The main catch here is that not everything you see on social media is accurate! People portray the best versions of themselves on the internet for others to praise them and make them feel superior. Social media can sometimes be totally detached from reality and hence we should never feel inferior to what we see on the media because no one’s life is as perfect as it seems on the net. Young teens should be content with themselves and feel comfortable in their own skin because everyone is perfect in their own way!

Social Media And Sleepless Nights

Using phones or computers right before bed is one of the most significant ways screen time impairs teens' sleep hygiene. The harmful blue light emitted by the mobile phone's screen interferes with the circadian cycle of the body, making it difficult to fall asleep and perhaps causing sleep disorders including insomnia. Most of the teenagers will find themselves engaged in scrolling through their phone all night long, browsing and surfing through different sites. This prevents them from getting the required amount of sleep that they need, which will result in them being lethargic and cranky all day long. A good night's sleep is very crucial for adolescents to be able to perform well academically as well as in maintaining a healthy and friendly relationship with his/her peers. Social media has made everyone attracted to itself like moths to a flame and that is why the excess use of it has made people go through sleepless nights which can lead to various other problems such as insomnia, irregular sleeping patterns and anxiety. Thus, use of social media right before bed might have a detrimental impact on how much and how well you sleep. It might be challenging to get to sleep if you use social media in bed. Additionally, it may shorten your sleep duration and prevent you from feeling rested the following day.

A Declining Sense Of Self Due To Social Media

Whether we do it consciously or unconsciously, online or offline, we all have a natural urge to compare ourselves to others. These comparisons aid in our evaluation of our own accomplishments, aptitude, personality, and emotions. This in turn affects the way we view ourselves. Social media is a platform where we see different individuals showcasing a wide range of their interests and talents and somewhere at the back of our mind, we cannot help but compare ourselves to them. Whether it be comparing ourselves in terms of appearance, talent, lifestyle or standard of living. Constantly drawing comparisons with people we see online tends to mentally drain us and lower our self esteem. Social media can play a very tricky role in how we feel about ourselves, it can have an impact on the amount of motivation we have.

We won't be inspired to develop if we believe we are already in a good position since we would feel that we are substantially superior to others. But if we believe that we are very inferior, we won't be inspired to improve because the objective seems impossible to reach. For a lot of people, their mental perception of how they look can get distorted due to social media. This further encourages them to indulge in risky and life threatening malpractices such as starvation, over exercising and various other. This is because by comparing themselves to the fake beauty standards they see on social media, teenagers will have a dysmorphic image of themselves and will do anything in their power to look like the people they see on instagram and facebook.

Discussion

Social media is a very resourceful platform if put to use in the right manner. It aids people in making content such as podcasts, vlogs, reels and videos which can reach a large audience. In recent times, a huge chunk of people have started some sort of online businesses which helps them cater to a number of buyers online. Whether it be selling unique stuff online or making reels and short videos to entertain viewers, social media has gone a long way in helping people make money easily by sitting at home. On the other hand, people often tend to misuse social media by spending too much time browsing and scrolling on various apps. As we say, everything is good if done in moderation, but this is not what the case is like when it comes to social media. Most of the teenagers these days are unable to keep track of how much time they are spending on social media and this is interfering with their academic and social life and playing a detrimental impact on their mental well being. In order to make optimum usage of the various services provided by social media but at the same time not letting it make you addicted to it, we should take steps like assigning a screen time for ourselves. This facility helps us keep track of the time we spend on each app which further encourages us to cut down on the usage of our phones if we feel it's necessary. Another way in which we can help ourselves from getting completely addicted to social media, is by regularly detoxifying ourselves from our mobile phones. We can start by temporarily deactivating or deleting our socials as taking a step back from apps such as instagram and facebook can help decrease anxiety and a fear of missing out. It can help one take out time for themselves and their loved ones which will in turn boost one's mood and social connections. Taking a break from such an addiction from time to time is like a breath of fresh air as it helps us in refreshing our mind. Instead of being glued to our mobile phones, we can use our precious time in doing various other things such as reading a new novel, spending time with family, going for a walk or even spending time outdoors.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude this research paper by stating that the impacts of social networking on us are evidently both beneficial and detrimental. The choice of what to accept from someone else is theirs alone. In light of this, it can be claimed that social media may be both a blessing and a curse for mankind, depending on how it is utilized. We should aim at utilizing social media in the most optimum way so that we can make the most of all the various facilities it provides us, but we should also keep in mind the disadvantages it can lead us to if used in excess. Therefore, in order to keep a tab on the amount of social media we are feeding to our minds we should take steps like keeping a screen time which tells us the amount of time we spend on our phones. We should also detoxify from social media from time to time as this will help us in sparing time for ourselves and engaging in new recreational activities.

Bibliography

- Grau, S., Kleiser, S., & Bright, L. (2019). Exploring social media addiction among student Millennials. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*.
- Pratama, M. O., Harinitha, D., Indriani, S., Denov, B., & Mahayana, D. (2020). Influence factors of social media and gadget addiction of adolescents in Indonesia. *Jurnal Sistem Informasi*, 16(1), 16-24.
- Beyens, I., Pouwels, J. L., van Driel, I. I., Keijsers, L., & Valkenburg, P. M. (2020). The effect of social media on well-being differs from adolescent to adolescent. *Scientific Reports*, 10(1), 10763.
- <https://schools.au.reachout.com/articles/benefits-of-internet-and-social-media>
- <https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/life/g30681374/social-media-detox-tips>
- <https://theconversation.com/how-social-media-can-crush-your-self-esteem-174009>