



The Negative Effects of Social Media on Adolescent Development and Mental Health

University of South Carolina Beaufort, Kara St. Laurent, 'BSN 2019

Introduction

Adolescents seek confirmation and acceptance, and in its absence, they feel inferior which leads to feelings of depression. Adolescents seek self discovery/identity discovery. In the world of social media, self discovery equates to the number of likes and followers they have. Failure to meet preconceived goals leads to negative body image, envy, narcissism, ego, low self-esteem, internalization of problems and rumination which leads to depressive symptoms. A positive correlation has been found between depressive symptoms and time spent on online social networks (4).

Over 95% of adolescents and young adults access the internet daily. About 81% report they use social media, and 67% report using it at least once a day (5). About 1 in 5 children worldwide experience mental health problems (2). It has not yet been researched how the mental health problems that result from social media usage impede or negatively affect development. Demonstration of feelings such as envy has been proven to lead to aggressive tendencies and behaviors (4). Adolescents may classify themselves as subordinates based off of their evaluations of peers on social media platforms (4). This feeling of subordination occurs when an adolescent perceives they are less than someone else. This feeling is generated by social media usage (4). Those who perceive themselves as subordinates are more vulnerable to depression (4). The effects of these aggressive behaviors and depressive symptoms has yet to be thoroughly researched.

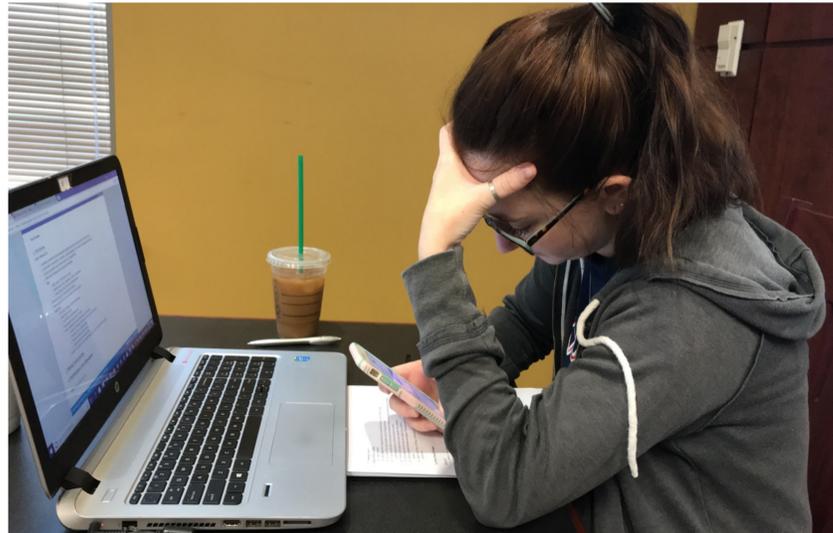
Objectives

- Evaluate significant life problems such as suicidal ideation and depression in adolescents that are influenced by social media
- Determine specific factors generated by social media that lead to adolescent depression and suicide
- Locate gaps in health care research and clinician knowledge regarding identification of behavioral health problems related to social media that affect adolescents
- Propose specific and necessary future research leading to effective therapies to improve adolescent behavioral health outcomes.

Methods

Inclusion and exclusion Criteria:

- Articles must be published within the last 5 years to provide the most up to date research and relevant findings.
- Articles must focus on the adolescent age group, other age groups were excluded to maintain specificity and accuracy.
- Relevance was screened through the use of key words such as, "social media", "depression", "adolescents."
- Research from countries outside of the United States were not excluded due to the fact that social media is used worldwide.
- Articles must include a factor that is generated by social media that effects adolescents either mentally or developmentally



Literature Review Table-Negative factors generated by Social Media

Study (with Authors)	Design/Methodology	Sample Size	Factors generated by social media	Findings	Worth in Practice
Yonker et al., (2014)	Systematic review	87 met inclusion criteria; 75 observational and 12 interventional	High risk sexual behaviors, alcohol, tobacco and other drug use, mental health issues, medical conditions.	Themes were identified that include high risk sexual behaviors, alcohol, tobacco and other drug use, health issues and medical conditions.	This study highlights that social media research is in its infancy. Themes have been identified but their exact ramifications are unknown. Further research in this area was proposed.
Tandoc et al., 2014	Survey	736 college students, recruited from a large Midwestern university	Depression, envy	This study focused on Facebook and its negative effects on college students. Statistics generated from the survey show that Facebook envy was the only significant and positive predictor of depression among college students.	This study proves that Facebook does not directly cause depression. It is the feeling of envy that develops when using Facebook that may lead to feelings of depression. The study proposes that the idea of subordination needs to be further researched.
Andreassen et al., 2017	Cross-sectional convenient sample	23,535 individuals	Narcissism, ego, negative self-esteem	Narcissism was positively related to addictive use of social media. Social media effect on self-esteem could not be determined.	Study did not provide conclusive evidence. Further studies are needed to determine social media's effect on narcissism and self-esteem.
Bor et al., (2014)	Literature search	19 studies met criteria for inclusion	Mental health problems such as internalizing problems	There was an increase in internalizing problems in adolescent girls in the past ten years.	Adolescents and children have experienced a change in the prevalence of mental health problems. Further studies are needed to determine the cause and its severity.
Burrow et al., (2016)	Survey	300 adults beginning at the age of 18	Self-esteem	The number of likes one receives on Facebook is correlated with self-esteem. It was concluded that one's self worth is determined by the response of others. This response in the experiment was likes on Facebook.	Social media is a powerful influence in the lives of adolescents. It has been concluded from this experiment that self esteem is determined by the feedback of one's peers. Further studies may be necessary to determine other aspects of an adolescent's life that may be affected by social media.

Conclusion

Through the careful evaluation of research articles, I have concluded that social media generates many negative effects on adolescent development. It has been suggested that social media causes adolescents to adopt unhealthy behaviors such as high risk sexual behaviors, and drug and alcohol consumption (5). The social media network, Facebook, has been proven through a study to generate feelings of envy which may lead to feelings of depression in an adolescent (4). Furthermore, the excessive, addictive use of social media was positively associated with the quality of narcissism (1). Another factor that was discovered was the tendency to internalize problems, specifically in adolescent girls (2). Lastly, this literature review has found that the number of "likes" that an adolescent receives on social media is correlated with the amount of self-esteem that they have (3). The number of likes is interpreted as the response or approval from the adolescent's peers (3).

Through this research, it is determined that the factors generated by excessive social media use are not thoroughly researched. Though the factors may be identified, it is uncertain how they affect an adolescent mentally and developmentally. Many research articles such as the ones in the literature review cannot conclude the long-term negative effects of social media.

Proposal for Future Research

The definitive effects of social media on the mental and developmental aspects of adolescents are not proven. Research needs to be conducted that focuses on specific factors involving adolescents. Developmental changes that are a result of excessive social media usage may be assessed through a study on academic performance. Research may also be conducted to identify what factors such as self-esteem and the tendency to internalize problems have on academic performance.

References

- 1 Andreassen, C. S., Pallesen, S., & Griffiths, M. D. (2017). The relationship between addictive use of social media, narcissism, and self-esteem: Findings from a large national survey. *Addictive Behaviors*, 64, 287-293.
- 2 Bor, W., Dean, A. J., Najman, J., & Hayatbakhsh, R. (2014). Are child and adolescent mental health problems increasing in the 21st century? A systematic review. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 48(7), 606-616.
- 3 Burrow, A. L., & Rainone, N. (2017). How many likes did I get? Purpose moderates links between positive social media feedback and self-esteem. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 69, 232-236.
- 4 Tandoc, E. C., Ferrucci, P., & Duffy, M. (2015). Facebook use, envy, and depression among college students: Is facebook making us depressed? *Computers in Human Behavior*, 43, 139-146.
- 5 Yonker, L. M., Zan, S., Scirica, C. V., Jethwani, K., & Kinane, T. B. (2015). "Friending" Teens: Systematic Review of Social Media in Adolescent and Young Adult Health Care. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 17(1).

Photo by the author