

# *The Impact of Social Media on Teenagers*

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**Abstract:** The rapid development of Internet technology has brought a brand new experience to people's lives, entertainment, work, and study. As a carrier of communication and socialization, social media is developing rapidly, and while adolescents enjoy the convenience brought by social media, the use of social media has also brought about certain impacts on the physical and mental development of adolescents. Social networking sites can promote the formation of online friendships among adolescents, but they can also lead to loneliness and depression and may cause adolescents to form online dependence. An overly open information environment can lead to social comparisons and dissatisfaction with adolescents' images of their bodies. Free speech can also lead to cyberbullying, which can have a negative impact on adolescents' sense of self and emotional experience. With the positive as well as negative impacts that social media can have on adolescents, society should pay more attention to how to mitigate the negative impacts of social media and how to go about controlling adolescents' addiction to social media.

**Keywords:** Mass media, social media use, impact, adolescents

## 1. Introduction

Due to the recent quick advancements in internet information technology as well as the growing popularity of smartphones and mobile internet, it is now feasible to connect and use the internet whenever and wherever you want, regardless of location. According to recent data from the United States, 88% of 13 to 18-year-olds have access to a desktop or laptop computer at home, while 95% of them have access to a smartphone [1]. Children and teenagers today are completely surrounded by and ingested in the digital world. New digital technologies that encourage interactivity and social engagement are used in conjunction with traditional media like television, radio, and magazines to give kids and teenagers rapid access to entertainment, knowledge, and social connections. People now have new opportunities for leisure, employment, and education thanks to the rapid expansion of Internet technology. Social media has permeated our social fabric and is pervasive despite our best attempts. However, teenagers see a significant detrimental effect from social media. The socialization process during adolescence is crucial and has a lasting impact on a person's development. Social media, like a two-edged sword, profoundly affects adolescents' personalities, psychology, social lives, ways of thinking, and interpersonal interactions. Teenagers' lives have been improved by social media, but there have also been many detrimental consequences for them. But how does the use of social media affect teenagers? The main reason is that because teenagers are not yet mature in mind, they are more curious about some novelties, and the network is filled with some vulgar network

information that will cause greater psychological harm to teenagers, which is unfavorable to their future healthy growth, and will directly lead to teenagers' rebelliousness and misperception of things. However, nowadays, more research is focused on the negative effects of social media, but forget that social media also has its benefits, people should do more research on how to better mitigate the negative effects of social media on teenagers, and what should be done to control it. Therefore, the state, schools, and families must take effective ways to avoid the psychological damage caused by the internet to teenagers.

## **2. Impact of Social Media**

Teenagers' lives are more dominated by social media, the Internet, and mobile devices as they become older. For instance, the Pew poll found that rates of use for the following social media sites: Instagram (52%), Snapchat (41%), Twitter (33%), Google (33%), Vine (24%), Tumblr (14%), and other social media (11%) [2]. Teenagers' growth is being somewhat impacted by social media, which has a wide range of psychological and physical repercussions. These factors do, however, have advantages and downsides for the development of adolescents.

### **2.1. Positive Impact**

#### **2.1.1. Social Aspect**

Firstly, teenagers can socialize more easily through social media. Such socialization is not affected by distance, and social media can help teens expand their social circles, communicate with different people, and share their ideas and interests [3]. This promotes their social and interpersonal skills, as well as giving them a better understanding of different cultures and perspectives. And if they make friends this way based on their hobbies, they will have a more common language, which will help them build more social relationships and improve their social skills. There is a 15-year-old girl named Lily, who often talks about the interesting things in her life with friends far away from home through the video function, and also keeps in close contact with her friends with the help of social media such as WeChat, voice, and video. When she meets some small partners who are afraid to communicate "face to face", she actively encourages them to try to open their hearts on social networking platforms to practice various ways of dealing with others. Not only that, Lily also has access to a wealth of learning materials on social networks and can learn about the big events happening around the world from the information shared by others [4].

#### **2.1.2. Promote Creativity and Aesthetic Appreciation**

Secondly, social media can promote creativity and improve aesthetics. On social media, many bloggers will post some of their daily lives, some demonstrations of various skills and talents, such as modeling design, video editing, music creation, art appreciation, sports achievements, and so on. All of these can stimulate the creativity and imagination of young people, allowing them to explore their potential in their creations and helping them to better find what they like to do [5].

#### **2.1.3. Learning Aspect**

The third is that social media is one of the most effective ways to teach students and influence their grades. In particular, Kaya and Bicen report that, if managed properly, social media can help students achieve better grades [6]. And social media can better provide teenagers with channels for learning and information acquisition. Because social media is the most used by contemporary teenagers and more concentrated in teenage groups, it can be a better and more important channel for teenagers to acquire information and knowledge. They can learn news, study courses, participate in discussions

share experiences, etc. through social media. Nowadays, many high school and junior high school students will habitually go to social media to ask for information about their studies and classroom assignments, and they can also expand their knowledge and horizons and learn more information through social media [5]. The multiple posts, tweets, videos, and articles shared on many social media outlets are now a valuable source of information for learning new skills every day. Teenagers spend most of their time receiving school social knowledge education in the classroom and cultural knowledge education from their parents at home, and they spend relatively little time actively acquiring knowledge as audiences and disseminating knowledge as communicators. However, social media has changed the way teenagers process and disseminate knowledge, whether it is scientific knowledge, humanistic knowledge, or other daily life knowledge, teenagers can easily obtain it through social media [7].

#### **2.1.4. Promote Participation**

The fourth is that social media can be used to promote participation in social causes and help more people. Social media makes it easier for teens to participate in social welfare activities because many bloggers organize volunteer activities and follow and retweet charitable messages through social media. Teens can develop their empathy through the messages they see and actively participate in these charitable projects, which also develops their sense of social responsibility and civic awareness [5].

## **2.2. Negative Impact**

### **2.2.1. Bodily Injury**

First, social media can take a toll on the physical health of teens. Prolonged use of social media can lead to sleep deprivation, poor posture, eyestrain, and even myopia. When teenagers play with mobile phones, they will lose the sense of time, often stay up late, and stare at electronic devices for a long time, which will affect their health. Excessive use of social media can also lead to a lack of physical activity and exercise, which can increase the risk of obesity and chronic disease. A large international study of nearly 300,000 children and adolescents found that watching one to three hours of television a day increased the risk of obesity by 10 to 27 percent [5].

### **2.2.2. Mental Health**

Second is the impact on mental health. Social media may cause teens to feel stressed and anxious because of the vanity, arrogance, and false world that is displayed in social media. On social media, they may be subjected to cyberbullying and harassment because cyberbullying is quite common and can happen to any young person online, so it can lead to damage to a teenager's self-esteem and mental health. Most studies have found that between 6% and 30% of adolescents have been cyberbullied and between 4% and 20% have cyberbullied others at some point [8]. In severe cases, it can also lead to physical injuries or mental difficulties such as depression, anxiety, and other psychological problems.

### **2.2.3. Social Anxiety**

Thirdly teenagers can feel social anxiety, problems with self-identity, and peer pressure on social media. Social media provides a platform for people to present themselves and gain recognition, but it can also trigger social anxiety and self-identity issues. Viewers may become overly concerned with the lives and judgments of others, leading to a negative impact on their own identity and self-esteem [5]. Teenagers will easily see classmates of the same age on social media, and when they do, teenagers

will unconsciously compare themselves, which will cause them to have more serious anxiety as well as peer pressure. The third-party influence model proposed by Thompson et al [9]. This model shows that when individuals display their image on social networking sites but also see more of the perfect image displayed by others, individuals will subconsciously judge themselves with a higher standard, resulting in negative self-awareness. Studies have shown that social networking site use is negatively associated with body image in adolescent girls. Because so much of social media focuses on appearance [10], the use of social networking sites may also cause teens to frequently exchange feedback on each other's physical appearance [11].

#### **2.2.4. Learning and Performance**

The fourth is the effect on learning and performance. Excessive use of social media may affect teenagers' learning and performance. They may become distracted and unable to concentrate on their studies, leading to a decrease in learning. Some teens may also spend a lot of time on social media and neglect their study tasks and assignments.

#### **2.2.5. Ideological Aspect**

Fifth, social media may affect the minds of teenagers. There will be some violent and inappropriate content on social networks, however, these can negatively affect their behavioral, emotional, and cognitive development, leading to bad behavioral habits and wrong values. Adolescents can easily obtain knowledge through social media, but due to the inevitable openness and uncertainty of information in social media applications, coupled with the characteristics of adolescents themselves, it is easier for them to edit and splice different types of knowledge and information of different natures when dealing with knowledge. Moreover, they are more concerned about the dissemination of knowledge than the knowledge itself, which may have the effect of conveying wrong information, receiving wrong information, etc., and then they are less concerned about the rightness or wrongness of the knowledge [7].

### **3. Discussion**

#### **3.1. Social Advice for Teens on Social Media Use**

##### **3.1.1. Safer Use of Social Media**

Regarding the safer use of social media by young people, first of all, it is very necessary to strengthen the construction and management of new online media. Strengthen the legislation related to the construction and management of online new media, establish the legal principles of online protection of minors in the regulations, and ensure the standards and technologies for grading and filtering information on the Internet. For minors, social media should only display information that they can see [12].

##### **3.1.2. Strengthen Supervision**

Strengthen supervision: The second step is to further standardize the oversight of Internet businesses by public security and other pertinent government agencies, as well as to improve content review, operational oversight, and public opinion tracking of online new media by news and publishing agencies, in order to guarantee that children can access the Internet in a secure manner [13].

### **3.1.3. Enhance Filtering of Bad Information**

Social media should strengthen the censorship and filtering of content on their online platforms, and emphasize the protection of young people's development [13].

### **3.1.4. Strengthen Support for Positive Content**

Fourth, the government should increase financial support for building new media for young people on the Internet to provide more positive platforms and content for young people.

### **3.1.5. Conduct Public Awareness Campaigns and Social Policy Initiatives**

Fifth, social policy measures and public awareness campaigns are required to support caring home and school environments that increase children's resilience in overcoming the difficulties of adolescence in the modern world [14].

## **3.2. Advice for Teens on Social Media Use**

### **3.2.1. Be Careful About Uploading Personal Information**

Firstly, be careful about uploading personal information, as the exposure of personal information on social media can have negative consequences. Teens should avoid uploading sensitive information such as their full name, home address, and school name. They should use nicknames and avoid using real photos as profile pictures. This can help protect their privacy.

### **3.2.2. Pay Attention to Language Norms**

Second, pay attention to language norms. Language norms are just as important on social media. Avoid inappropriate or offensive language, especially when directed at another person or group. Friendly and respectful communication is the foundation of a good online community.

### **3.2.3. Manage Time Wisely**

Third, manage your time on social media wisely. Using social media can be fun and help teens stay connected with friends and family. However, they need to manage their time wisely to avoid excessive social media use that interferes with their studies and lives. Make sure they have enough time for outdoor activities, sports, and other useful activities.

### **3.2.4. Pay Attention to The Level of Language**

Fourth, pay attention to the level of language. People often share their lives, thoughts, and opinions on social media. When teens comment or chat, they should remain rational, respectful, and polite. Avoid getting into heated arguments or conflicts with others on social media. Language standards are also important. Avoid inappropriate or offensive language, especially when directed at another person or group. Friendly and respectful communication is the foundation of a good online community.

### **3.2.5. Do Not Spread Inaccurate Information**

Fifth, do not spread inaccurate information. On social media, people have a responsibility to share truthful and accurate information, including minors. Do not share unconfirmed news or rumors. If you have any doubts about a piece of information, it is best to check further or seek professional advice to avoid misleading others or causing unnecessary distress.

## 4. Conclusion

As technology advances, web-based social networking has become part of everyone's daily life. Not only adults but also teenagers, who are in adolescence and have strong curiosity and desire for knowledge, high self-consciousness, impulsive emotions, want to be independent but feel lonely, rebellious but lack self-control, etc. These psycho-physiological characteristics make it easy for teenagers to get lost in the complex online world and develop many inappropriate online behaviors. The benefits of social media to teenagers are manifold. It provides more opportunities and platforms for young people to develop better in social interaction, knowledge acquisition, self-expression, etc. However, various pressures and comparisons often occur on social media, which may affect the mental health of teenagers. Teenagers also need to pay attention to protecting privacy, avoiding addiction, and using it correctly when using social media. Therefore, a safe and healthy social media environment is very important for them. However, there is much for educators to study, not to prove that they are harmful to young people or to find out why they should be banned, but to understand their causes, to provide appropriate means of prevention and management, and to encourage young people to use social media healthily. The above research on social networking sites is only part of the research in this area and is not exhaustive. As the field of digital media is growing rapidly and new media continue to emerge, future research and studies are needed.

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