

The Negative Impact of Social Media on Adolescents

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Abstract: Adolescents' lives are more colorful and splendid than ever thanks to the pervasive commercialization of mass media, which fosters interpersonal connections and expands entertainment options. However, adolescents' moral construction is negatively impacted by their heavy use of social media, which has a double negative effect on their physical and psychological health (depression, anxiety, jealousy, comparison). Consequentially, mass media culture grows more and more unfavorable as a result of long-term exposure to negative impacts. This paper will then go on to examine, from a more in-depth perspective and with a more subjective orientation toward media commercialization, the negative effects and consequences of passive social media use on the bodies and minds of adolescents using various social media platforms (such as Instagram and Tiktok).

Keywords: Negative impact, Commercialization, Physical health, Mental health, Adolescents

1. Introduction

Instagram, Weibo, and Tiktok are just a few examples of the numerous new forms of social networking software that have been firmly ingrained in the daily lives of teens, becoming vital social tools for meeting friends, enjoying oneself, and getting through one's daily routine. Although social media can improve communication and enjoyment, it has also been shown to negatively affect the moral development of many young people due to their widespread use and passive intake of material. Many young men and women today become "cyber celebrities" on social media platforms, often boasting "angelic faces" and "devilish bodies" to entice their legions of followers.

The cyber celebrities with flawless appearances and physique are the focus of considerable attention and pursuit on social media, despite the fact that they represent a negligible fraction of the general population. Media culture, with its more elaborate layers of packaging and adornment featuring the most fun cultural implications and the most commercialized marketing practices, is eating away at the positive self-perception and value orientation of generations of young people. It is undeniable that commercialized contexts on social media have greatly enriched young people's leisure and entertainment, making their lives more colorful than ever before. However, the widespread availability of commercialized social media information has resulted in a "vacuum" of moral space for adolescents. Adolescents' self-constructs of morality are not strongly constrained by age or social experience. Responsibility and correct ideological and moral values become weak in the face of the "vacuum" when exposed to graphic information from the virtual world, leading to a sharp decline in self-satisfaction, deliberate diet control, inferiority complex and comparison psychology, and possibly the spread of violence and the formation of false sexual consciousness.

As a result, this research will investigate the physiological and psychological outcomes of adolescents' passive social media consumption.

2. Resulting in Negative Body Intentions among Adolescents

To begin, preteens and teenagers develop unfavorable body attitudes because of the false information they receive from social media. Social and cultural norms and expectations, such as the ideal body type, weight, and style, are widely disseminated through the mass media [1]. Adolescents' physical health can suffer as a result of the widespread body image distortion spread by social media. Cultivation theory, based on a large body of literature examining the media's impact, posits that, over time, people's exposure to television and other forms of media gradually shapes their ideas of reality. Adolescents are more likely to have negative body intentions when they are exposed to the media's ideal body type portrayal [2]. A woman's likelihood of experiencing negative feelings like unhappiness with her appearance increases in direct proportion to the amount of time and effort she devotes to social media [3]. Video-sharing platforms like Netflix and YouTube are examples of popular social software that serve not just to entertain users but also to disseminate societal norms and values. Adolescents' thinking and conduct most obviously exhibit a group trait shared by the most specific and pervasive social software: imitation.

However, adolescents are still in the transitional stage between childhood and adulthood and do not yet have the cognitive abilities of adults. Many of the assumptions that teenagers make about the world come from these video platforms, particularly those featuring slim, fashionable, and dressed characters. *Gossip Girl*, a show about New York City's elite, has featured debates that take issue with how the media portrays obesity and the pressure to be fashionable. Teens who partake in these debates are more likely to reject more practical worldviews in favor of those that promote an unrealistically thin or muscular ideal body type for women and men, respectively. Constant exposure to the media's ideal representation of the perfect body exacerbates adolescents' body image issues, and the discrepancy between their ideal and actual body shapes compounds their feelings of dissatisfaction with their physical selves. More and more young people today use social media as a primary means of communication and a venue for presenting and discussing their ideal body images [4]. Social media is often used by adolescents to gauge their own worth in relation to that of their peers. Think about the popular microblogging service Weibo among today's youth. Youth are being influenced by the "thin is beautiful" and "muscularity" ideals they see promoted in the Weibo community, where many women with perfect bodies and men with impressive physiques have large followings. Adolescents who spend too much time on social media may begin to compare their bodies to those of bloggers due to their immature sense of right and wrong. As a result, they may develop feelings of dissatisfaction with their physical appearance, which can have serious consequences for their psychological and physiological well-being. Adolescents' rates of exhibiting symptoms similar to those of anorexia and other eating disorders may be higher than average among users of social media. Teenage girls are more likely to be unhappy with their bodies if they are put under peer pressure to be thin, according to research by Gondoli et al. [5]. This means that when people are dissatisfied with their comparison results, they are more likely to engage in extreme behaviors like dieting and exercising in order to maintain their body shape, and they are also more likely to pick and edit their photos carefully so that they look better in the comparison. When young people are pushed to keep up a certain body image, they will become more self-conscious of their flaws and develop negative body attitudes.

3. Influence on Self-Evaluation of Adolescents

As a second point, adolescents' fundamental sense of self-worth can be directly and negatively impacted by the passive acceptance and use of social software. Adolescents' portrayals on social media have become increasingly curated along with the expansion of the Internet. In other words, users often display their uniqueness by sharing content that reflects an idealized social norm [6]. Depressive symptoms, anxiety, body dissatisfaction, and self-esteem are just some of the mental health variables that have been linked to Instagram use. Self-ratings of attractiveness decrease after using social media, suggesting that prolonged use may have negative effects on mental health [7].

Adolescents may be more vulnerable to depression and anxiety if they use Instagram frequently enough to trigger a shift in the direction of social networks. The term "fitspiration" (a portmanteau of the words "fitness" and "inspiration") has recently become popular among adolescent girls; however, the majority of "fitspiration" images feature extremely slim and toned women [8]. Adolescent girls suffer from body image issues and low self-esteem when exposed to media depicting thin, idealized women. Adolescent girls strive to present a positive image to their friends and peers and a confident persona to strangers and admirers. The psychological burden and pressure that results from bearing these additional expenses is an unintended side effect of using social software. Adolescents' mental health suffers from the time spent on social media, particularly in regards to their ability to form and maintain positive relationships and to accept themselves.

Unquestionably, the emergence of modern social media has brought people closer together in ways never before possible. Adolescents' use of social media has evolved from mere utility to integral part of daily life, allowing them to fulfill psychological needs for social connection and belonging. However, due to the varying degrees of social attention experienced by each user, social media can lead to increased anxiety and depression in some people. The theory of the direct media effect postulates that when a stimulus is presented in the media, the audience immediately reacts to it. This means that when terms like "long legs," "thin waist," and "abs" become commonplace on social media, they will have a direct impact on the accurate judgment of teenagers, gradually leading to a propensity toward pathological networking and negative emotions like loneliness and jealousy. Adolescents, for instance, tend to overstate the positives and underplay the negatives when presenting information about themselves on social media in order to make a better impression among their peers. This type of presentation of oneself to the world can lead to feelings of jealousy and comparison among peers while they are online shopping.

Furthermore, if they spend too much time using social media, they will be unprepared for real-world social interactions, leading to the development of emotional and psychological barriers. Adolescents' mental health will suffer if they passively accept and use social media apps, because these behaviors lead to the development of negative emotional components.

4. Influence on Adolescents' Mind and Body

Last but not least, the rapid expansion of social media within the framework of media commercialization has a negative effect on adolescents' values, sexual awareness, and behavioral output. At the same time that adolescents are becoming increasingly self-centered, the ideal and moral concepts that shape the culture at large are becoming increasingly watered down, leading to a gradual secularization and utilitarianization of values [9]. Adolescents' perceptions of their social standing and their social imagination may be distorted by the pervasiveness of social media in their lives.

In particular, the rise of social media has increased teen engagement, but the content shared on these sites is shallow and superficial, focusing exclusively on issues of appearance, wealth, and fashion while stereotyping girls as "irrational" and boys as "macho" in their relationships. These kinds of claims are commonplace on the web and even prevalent.

Hedonistic and consumer-focused concepts are increasingly popular in the commercialized mass media environment where they can be used to generate revenue and garner audience interest. One should not downplay the effect that the spread of such false beliefs has on the minds of today's youth. Of course, this is not entirely the result of bad media and platforms, as a large number of teenagers are fueling the market and contributing to the phenomenon's growth. However, the emergence of social platforms and even some media accounts aimed at promoting certain self-righteous values without considering the bottom line of morality cannot be divorced from the persistent growth of this group, leading to undesirable behaviors such as showing off and climbing, pursuing novelty, and blindly following the crowd among modern teenagers.

Second, young people's bodies and minds are negatively impacted by the commercialized media context in terms of sexual awareness. The three main features of objectified body consciousness that are socialized through social networking sites are internalization of culturally dominant ideals of attractiveness, body surveillance, and self-evaluations based on appearance [10].

Virtual and explicit sexualized cultural content abounds in online film, literature, and music. Adolescents have great latitude and opportunity for imitation in their pursuit of pornographic content on the Internet [9] because of the Internet's transcendental and virtual nature. On the other hand, the Internet's depiction of sexual organs, sexual behavior, and sexual pleasure is highly alluring and provocative to weak-willed adolescents, making it easy to stimulate their impulsive behavior and potentially cause irreparable harm to their bodies and minds. The most serious and noticeable negative impact of mass media on teenagers' behavior in the context of commercialization is the media's tendency to make teenagers imitate violence, sometimes to the point of developing violent habits.

Crime, kidnapping, and murder scenes in films, television shows, and the news tend to attract a lot of viewers and clicks, just like pornographic content does. Adolescents, on the other hand, are still cognitively immature, so their behavioral norms and judgment are still biased; as a result, they are especially prone to seek excitement in their minds and emulate examples of violence and gore. Consequently, the strong commercialization of media will have a serious negative impact on the physical and mental health of adolescents due to the subversion of values, the weak sense of correctness, and the promotion of violence.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the emergence and pervasiveness of social media is a direct result of the rise in people's cultural and psychological needs alongside the progress of society. Additionally, it presents some covert threats to society, particularly during the formative years of adolescence, when the mind and body are most vulnerable. Teenagers' mental and physical well-being may be negatively affected by the way they are portrayed on social media due to the pressure to conform to unrealistic standards of beauty. Thus, in the modern era of information, mass media is not only an essential tool for helping adolescents comprehend the world beyond their own, but also an essential platform for them to celebrate the glory of their youth. The media must pay closer attention to the content on social media and increase their resistance to obscene material like pornography, violence, and poor values because of the need for a commercialized context. The media should highlight not just the positive outcomes of such coverage, but also the potential drawbacks. Adolescents should also develop healthy self-esteem and come to terms with the fact that there is more to beauty than the idealized images presented on social media. No one else's beauty is more important than your own, and there is no point in trying to mimic someone else's style.

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