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IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE MENTAL HEALTH OF TEENAGERS IN THE US

Abdulrahman Ali AL-gasem

Email: algasemabdo@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The presence of social media in the technology world has dramatically revolutionized the way of communicating, maintaining friendships and socializing. As there are many advantages of living in this digital era, there are a lot of behavioural and mental risks attached to it as well. It is mainly due to the excessive use of social media that takes a form of addiction and waste a lot of time of the user, resulting in the loss of efficiency due to the mental health of a person continuously being involved in socializing activities ignoring other main tasks. This paper contains various impacts of using social media affecting the children of in the US.

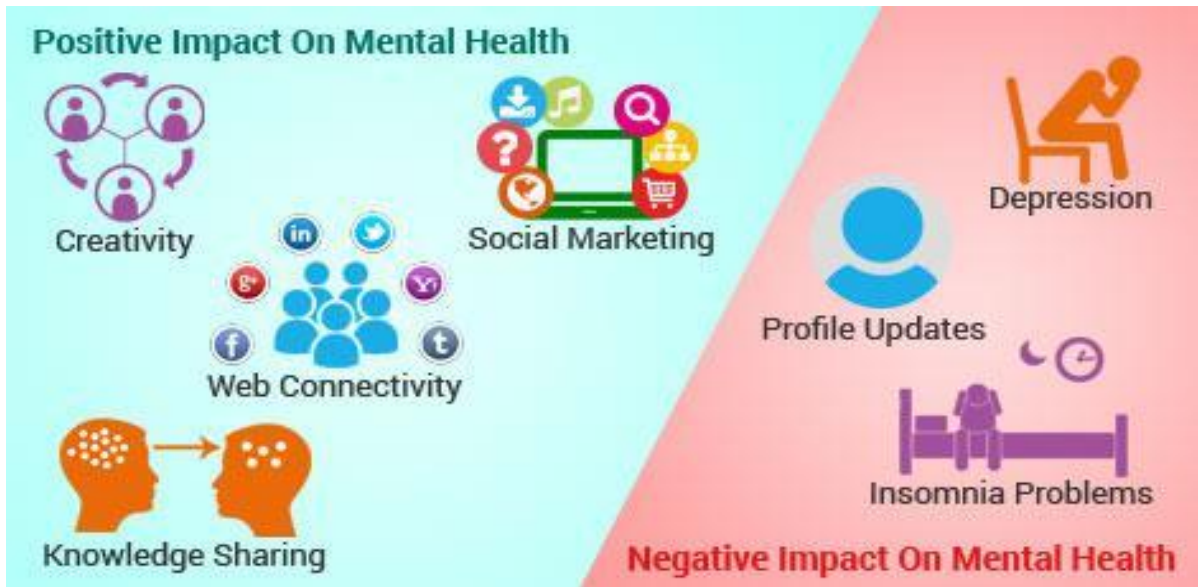
Keywords: Social Media, Teens, Mental Health, US, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Risks.

INTRODUCTION

Social media can generally be defined as various platforms or media for the electronic communication including the networking applications and websites; here the users have the opportunity to gather online and share a lot of information content, ideas, messages and videos etc. In the modern era of technological advancement, most of the teenagers in the US are users of social media including Instagram, Facebook and Twitter etc. that can be used surfed on smartphones, tablets and computers as well. As the instant messaging services have gained a lot of popularity in the last decade; there are many famous applications like Whatsapp, Snapchat and Facebook Messenger that have become part and parcel of the social media and easy option for quick sharing of information as well. According to a recent study conducted by the PEW Research Centre it has been observed that up to 95% of the teens in the US are smartphone users and almost 45% among those who remain online continuously. About 7% of the teens have their accounts on Instagram and Snapchat while 85% of the teenagers declared to surf Youtube over the internet (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

It is a common concept among the teens that being continuous socialized using various social media platforms keep them updated and best connected to others that was not possible before. Since the introduction of social media in the modern world, there are a lot of substantial concerns raised regarding the behaviour and mostly on the mental health of the teens using them. This report discusses the link between the use of social media and its impact on the behaviour and mental health of teens in the US.

Although there are also positive aspects of using social media discussed, the main focus is on the risks associated with the use of social media on the mental health of teens in the US (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011).



Source: Retrieved from <http://www.aarogya.com/articles/children-s-health/effect-of-social-media-on-mental-health-of-adolescents.html>

POSITIVE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON MENTAL HEALTH OF TEENS IN THE US

Most of the online literature and blogs highlight the negative effects of using social media on the minds of teenagers. It is a fact that social media has a lot of potential risks associated with it, but it does not mean that the benefits to be ignored. It is to be accepted that social media has become part and parcel of our daily lives and now it does not seem possible to live without it. Therefore, it is not a good idea to refrain to teens from the use of this facility. A lot of teenagers consider social media as appositive resource that provides a lot of information, support and ease.

Instead, it is better to promote its positive and creative use that can enhance their thinking and working. Below are some of the most common benefits of using social media on the minds of teenagers and their behaviour as well (Anderson & Jiang, 2018).



Source: Retrieved from <https://sites.google.com/site/ghsocialmediainmpact/positive-impact-cont-d/positive-impacts-of-social-media-on-some-selected-businesses>

1. It Spreads Kindness and Social Awareness:

Teenagers have the desire to express themselves effectively, get updated and better information, getting and sharing of creative ideas and most important to be interconnected; effects their mental health in a very positive manner. The use of different social networking sites (including Facebook, Instagram and Facebook etc.) to express themselves instead of limiting their thoughts and questions in the mind that is very important for living a confident and comfortable life without any difficulty.

According to a report, the use of social media has been strongly recommended the online initiation for the betterment of affordability and accessibility of the services for the mental health; as these actions can play an important role in preventing suicides of the teenagers (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011).

2. Interactive Skills Learning:

By having access to social media sites, teens can interact actively and confidently for a variety of online learning activities that are very important to improve their digital skills. The online engagement of teens with different people in different environments enhance their digital skills and assists them in a proper understanding of the suitable digital discourse. It is very beneficial for teenagers to learn the digital skills that can be learnt and practised that may help them in their advanced studies and prepare them for the digital workspace for the future. It also keeps their mind active and helps in quick decision making when performing various tasks (Khan, Wohn & Ellison, 2014).

3. Educational Resources and Support:

Teens use a lot of online platforms including the social media for working on their collaborative educational assignments. They have the opportunity for discussing and sharing new ideas, dividing and planning various tasks and finally sharing feedback on the finished tasks. Social media has proved to be a very helpful educational resource; for example, networking websites such as Wikipedia and Youtube are considered to be rich sources of information from all over the world. Thousands of

educational and skills learning videos are uploaded at Youtube regularly that helps teens and adults for learning and improving a lot of skills (Rutherford, 2010).

4. Enhancement of Creative Abilities:

Social media gives a lot of opportunities to the users to connect and interact with others for the creation and sharing of content related to a lot of subjects and topics. A notable benefit of the social media for teenagers is to make them able to think creatively that is different from the common concept for a subject or task, that enhance their engagement with their social network and real life as well. Teens, being the majority for using most of the social media, teens can assist in the designing and updating of various social media platforms (Peppler & Solomou, 2011).

5. Promoting Diversity and Tolerance:

The purpose of using social media is not only to encourage networking, and it includes networking with people from different religions, cultures, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds that help in exploring a lot of differentiated ideas. It helps teens in tolerating others and dealing with people from diversified backgrounds. It also supports creating mental and emotional harmony with other people from all over the world (Mazur & Richards, 2011).

6. Boosting Confidence and Feeling of Independence:

The engagement of teens over different social media platforms is supposed to be very attractive to teenagers. It seems to be a new location that is discovered and requires special skills and expertise to get the best advantage. Teens have a thirst to be equipped and learn a lot for their digital identity and survival, which gives them the opportunity to act independently and more confidently for being considered and creating a positive identity. This helps them to think positively in their real life as well as being online (Livingstone, 2008).

7. Social Identity and Interconnectivity:

Social media helps in creating and extending the collective (group) and personal (individual) identities of the teens. In the entry levels of joining social media, teens often enjoy online independence by experimenting and creating one or more new identities. They are provided with suitable independence for discovering themselves in different ways with their newly created identities. They have the opportunity to freely discuss a lot of issues online, which are not considered to be openly discussed in different cultures including sexual issues, mental health problems and reproductive health etc. It helps them to get reliable and proper solutions for addressing their questions on the online platform. The teens create online relationships that are purely based on mutual understanding and trust that have a lot of positive effects on physical and mental health as well (Greenhow, 2011).

8. Support and Inspiration:

Being the best online tool for communication, social media can be utilized positively by the teens for inspiring and supporting each other. A lot of teenagers use social media in the form of a primary method for communicating with their friends and peers along with traditional mobile texting. They also use their accounts of social media for resolving the problems in their personal lives and supporting each other. It helps in making their friendships and relationships strong that help in mental satisfaction and boost confidence (Bandura, 2003).

NEGATIVE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON MENTAL HEALTH OF TEENS IN THE US

As social media is becoming popular day by day, the issues related to the mental health of teenagers are rising continuously. It is not totally because of social media, but a major part of the related problems occur due to it. There is a dramatic change observed in the methods of socializing and communication of people in the current digital era that has many benefits, but, in parallel, there are a lot of risks and issues attached to it. It is mainly because the majority of teenagers indulge in unproductive and unimportant activities online, skipping the main benefits of developing the required social skills. They also share a lot of information about themselves that can be used by someone for negative activities. Many social media platforms are willingly designed to encourage users for sharing their maximum information for making their profile that can be harmful (Jiang, Luo & Kulemeka, 2017).

A lot of precious time is wasted just by remaining connected online to the social platforms and checking every update, which may not be necessarily important. Many teens get trapped in cyberbullying, time-wasting activities and may finally feel being left out due to various reasons. One of the considerable negative impacts of social media is depression. Currently, it cannot be appropriated that exactly how much is the part of social media that initiates depression in teens. There are a lot of negative impacts of the social media on the mental health of the teens that need to be well addressed including the following (Adjei, Nowlin, & Ang, 2016).



Source: Retrieved from <https://steemit.com/news/@mellaadelia/the-negative-impact-of-social-media-ec3f299003985>

1. Facebook Depression:

There are continuous concerns being raised concerned about the mental health of teens effecting due to social media.

Nowadays, there is a term used ‘Facebook Depression’ that relates to the depression among teens who spend a lot of time on various social media platforms. It is explained in a report by the American Academy of Paediatrics as a specific type of depression that advances when the people waste a substantial time of their everyday life on various platforms of social media, and after some time they show the common symptoms of depression that occur due to excessive online surfing. According to a study it has been observed that extreme users of social media are 27% more vulnerable to depression and related issues in the US (Jelenchick, Eickhoff, & Moreno, 2013).

According to a report, in the US the depression level in boys rose by 21% from 2012 to 2015, and in girls, it increased by a substantial 50% during the period. The main reason for the Facebook Depression is the awarding the superstar status to many people that create inferiority complex for a lot of teens when they see others sharing the status of their outdoor adventures while and having luxuries etc. It creates a very negative impact on the mental health of the teens that may lead to suicide attempts in extreme cases. In contrast, the teens that spend suitable time on social media can experience the opposite impact that includes the strengthening of the positive image of themselves in mind (Tandoc Jr, Ferrucci & Duffy, 2015).

2. Impact on Teen Education:

The social media has introduced many innovative methods for the purpose of educating teens by the use of notebooks, tablets and smartphones.

A lot of students misuse these devices during the study by being active on social networks, rather than using it for educational purposes. This distracts their mind and the time that is committed to studies gets wasted as at many times the teachers are unable to recognize the distraction of students who are involved in other activities online. It has also been noted that there is a lot of wrong information posted in the social media by amateurs that mislead the students that may end in failing the assignment or whole course as well (Kuppuswamy & Narayan, 2010).

A lot of teenage students are not able to have face to face communication with others because they are always busy using social media continuously even in the classroom. Many bloggers post literature that shows the negative picture of a subject, the teens that follow such blogs get used to it that affect their thinking ability, creating a lot of misunderstanding and they always consider the negative side of any topic (Wang, Chen & Liang, 2011).

3. Negative Impact of Social Media on Young Teens:

In the modern digital world, social media is becoming equipped with a lot of new features and tools that can easily attract and involve especially young teenagers. They communicate and have a conversation with their friends and classmates over various social platforms on an almost regular basis. The bad thing is that they not only communicate with the known people but also interact with a lot of unknown people whom they have never met and do not know them personally; that may be harmful in a lot of ways.

It is possible that the unknown people whom they are communicating with may take advantage of them in different ways that can affect the thinking of the young teens for all unknown people (Espinoza & Juvonen, 2011).

The strangers can get their online updated information that may lead to robbery, kidnapping and even murder in the worst cases. There are some cases reported in which the adults target young teens using their social media information and ask for a meeting without purpose. Due to excessive interaction of people over social media, it has become very difficult to sort out strangers from the friends' list, making it a very hectic task. A lot of youngsters waste their precious time chatting while performing sensitive tasks. There are some violent blogs being run by strange people that compel them to be involved in violent activities that affect their physical and mental health as well (Hübner Barcelos, & Alberto, 2014).

4. Anxiety and Sleep Deprivation in Teenagers:

A lot of teens get anxious when they are not able to check their social media accounts and updates; or if they face problem in sharing any post that may be due to poor internet connectivity. This condition is known as a social media anxiety disorder that is genuinely a mental health problem. These issues are considered to be very common especially in the teens of the United States. It implies that as we acquire better technology, we are more vulnerable to be stressed out. Researchers have found out that on 20% of the social media users that include the majority of teenagers in the US cannot live for more than three hours without checking their accounts (Sisman, Yoruk & Eleren, 2013).

Studies suggest that most the teens that are obsessed with social media are not able to have enough or proper sleep. The more they are involved in these activities, the less sleep they get. According to a study, two-thirds of the teens in the US who are social media users get very less sleep as compared to the recommendations. It has also be found that teen girls using social media are more prone to have sleep deprivation as compared to teenage boys (Adams & Kisler, 2013).

5. Illness Due To Social Media Addiction:

Studies have found a deep relation between excessive use of social media with anxiety and depression, especially in teens. Research has shown that many teens check their accounts for unlimited times in a day that distracts them from performing other tasks with concentration. Being online over the social media for a lot of time may result in a lot of sicknesses including neck pain, eye strain and a lot of posture problems including the lower back problems. It may also cause many other diseases including obesity, nutritional issues, heart problems and stroke risks in worst cases etc. In addition to these illnesses, there are a lot of mental health diseases associated with addiction to social media. These include impulsive disorder, depression, loneliness, paranoia and issues with the functioning of mind that may cause severe effects to the mental health as well (Radovic, Gmelin, Stein & Miller, 2017).

As far as the social media addiction is concerned, although it has not completely fulfilled the criteria for a strict psychiatric analysis, it is a fact that extreme use of social media may result in both behavioural and mental health diseases as well.

It has been feared that the addiction may result in the suffering of other parts of the life of the teens to a great extent, so they become unsatisfied most of the time that results in many other issues due to it. As the teen waste most of the time online and lonely, instead of communicating with family and friends, it leads them to the sense of isolation that finally leads to the form of depression (Gerlich, Browning & Westermann, 2010).

As social media has many wore effects in teens, it is the job of parents or guardians to take much care of the children. It should be made sure that the teens are permitted exploring the world within limits prescribed according to their age and mentality. In the technological age, it is very important to note the time that the teens are surfing online, involved in what type of activities and the practical application in real life what they have learnt from the online world.

6. Cyberbullying:

One of the main issues of using social media is cyberbullying that is increasing rapidly especially in the teens and is supposed to have a lot of negative effects on them. Cyberbullying includes posting, sharing and forwarding malicious, damaging, untrue or negative information or content related to others that effect their reputation to a great extent. It also includes sharing personal or private information of others resulting in their disgrace and awkwardness that is not supposed to be shared in any condition. It has been observed that some people even cross the limits of cyberbullying that leads to criminal or unlawful behaviour leading to worse consequences.

According to the School Crime Supplement 2015, it was observed that up to 21% of the teens using social media experience bullying over the internet (Notar, Padgett & Roden, 2013).

The content that the teens share online works as the reflection of their thinking, conduct and actions. It serves as their digital record that maintains their online reputation that may be obtainable by schools colleges etc. that can check their online activities and social media behaviour. It is therefore very essential for the teens to be safe from cyberbullying and also from cyberbullying others as it has very harmful effects on the mental health of not only the person being bullied but also the person involved in its doing (Hinduja, & Patchin, 2013).

CONCLUSIONS: IMPACTS AND LIMITED USE

As the impact of social media on the mental health of teens in the US has been discussed, it is clear that the use of the latest technology has many benefits and a lot of drawbacks as well. The use of advanced devices is resulting in the increased use of social media by almost a majority of teenagers in their daily lives. It has considerably improved the quality of learning for the students. On the other hand, social media is also the culprit for the negative effects on the mental health of teens in a lot of ways. Sharing of false or unrelated information may lead to the misleading of students that may result in time wastage and failure. One of the demerits of using social media is the invading of the privacy of teens and cyberbullying that is considered one of the key concerns nowadays. There are many online blogs that attract teens and influence them to be involved in wrong activities that may be injurious for their mental health.

Hence, it can be concluded that although social media has a lot of benefits, it is very important to utilize it in the prescribed and positive manner avoiding its addiction.

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