

The Toxic Reflections of Social Media on Adolescents

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Abstract

Currently social media is a rapidly evolving platform for younger people to communicate, express themselves and share content of all kinds. It has given rise to a new cultural paradigm that drives technology and businesses while changing the way people interact. As a tool, social media is a double-edged sword; while it has many benefits, it has also influenced adolescents in various unhealthy ways. Nowadays observing adolescents being insensitive to chat in homes when relatives and guests are around, worshipping places, schools, colleges, hospitals, shopping malls, trains, marriage ceremonies, funerals, festivals and in other various social gatherings has become an obvious and usual phenomenon. Adolescents are so preoccupied and engrossed into their smart phones that they do not even bother to look up as to where they are which results in their inability to prioritize as to what is important and what isn't. Attention thus has been shifted from real to virtual world and visible to invisible friends. Social media may have certain advantages but it has affected the adolescents severely. Addiction to smart phones and internet, cyber bullying, reduction of real human contact, adverse effects on physical as well as mental health, sleep deprivation, stress, depression, lower self-esteem, FOMO, risky sexual behaviour, pornography, threat to privacy, selfieholism, poor concentration, loose temperament, social isolation, hacking, violent behaviour, rumour mongering, wastage of time and adverse effect on academic performance are some of the toxic reflections of social media.

Key Words: *Academic Performance, Adolescents, Social Media, Toxic Reflections*

Introduction

Social media is a rapidly evolving platform for younger people lately to communicate, express themselves and share content of all kinds. It has given rise to a new cultural paradigm that drives technology and businesses while changing the way people interact. Due to the advancement in technology, people are insisted to accept different lifestyles. It is clear that social media has become part of people's lives. Social media is a web-based form of data communication. The impact of social networking sites on adolescents is significant. Many adolescents are using their laptops, tablet computers and smart phones to view Tweets and status updates from their friends and family. Social media can have many positive aspects that keep users engaged and stimulated, but there are many negative aspects as well that affect major dimensions of adolescent development. The way adolescents are using social media and its consequences on society in general and adolescents in particular are alarming.

Negative Impact of Social Media on Adolescents

General opinion of the impact of social media on adolescents is that it does more harm than good. Here are some of the negative impacts/ toxic reflections of social media on adolescents in particular and whole society in general:

Addiction

The most well-known downside of social media is the addiction it creates. Constantly checking the news feed of the different social media sites becomes an addictive habit. Subject specialists reflect that certain features such as 'likes' and 'shares' activate the reward centre in the brain. This reward circuitry is highly sensitive during adolescence and may partly explain why more teenagers are into social media than adults. These features further influence moods of adolescents. Being social creatures, humans value interaction and connection, both of which determine how humans think of themselves. This drives a lot of human's behaviour on a day-to-day basis to be centred on social media. Adolescents addicted to social media end up spending hours each day watching videos, photos and other content posted by their friends and accounts they follow. This addiction interrupts other activities such as school work, sports, study and other productive routines. They end up wasting a significant amount of time every day resulting in poor grades in school. Some heavy users of social media acknowledge to checking their feeds as many as 100 times a day and occasionally during school hours too. Some of the teenagers also realize that they are wasting

a lot of time on social media and that affects their mood negatively. It also builds in them a defeatist attitude.

Reduction in Real Human Contact

Screen relationships also detract real-life relationships and building social skills in children and teenagers. This happens as they grow up without learning how to read non-verbal cues and facial gestures of people. Social interaction is critical to developing the skills needed to understand other people's moods and emotions. Hence children growing up interacting mostly with social media may turn out non-empathetic and also become poor at communicating verbally and nonverbally.

Reduces Learning and Research Capabilities

Students are depending more on the information reachable easily on these social networking sites and the web. This reduces their learning and research capabilities.

Reduces Command over Language Usage and Creative Writing Skills

Students generally utilize slang words or abbreviated types of words on long range interpersonal communication locales. They begin depending on the PC language structure and spelling check highlights. This decreases their charge over the dialect and their experimental writing abilities.

Effect on Health

The unnecessary use of social networking sites has an effect on the mental as well as physical health. Adolescents neither take their meals on time nor take appropriate rest, due to being busy with social media. The abuse of these destinations once a day has many adverse impacts on the physical and psychological wellness of students making them lazy and unmotivated to make contact with the general population face to face. Psychologists have also long observed bad effects of social media on the mental health of children. It could be due to the influence of social comparisons, cyber bullying and decreased person-person interactions. Using social media is also known to lead to a decline in subjective well-being in youngsters. The more adolescents use Facebook and other social networking sites, the worse they feel on a moment-moment basis while feeling less satisfied with their lives in general. Teens are also observed to be suffering from "Facebook depression" after spending too much time on it or other social networking sites. Some also become anxious and moody as they see that the lives

of their friends are better than theirs, even though they may know that their representation is idealized. However, vulnerable teens are more prone to this than their confident counterparts.

Fear of Missing out (FOMO)

While some adolescents get affected by the burden of having to react to posts of their friends or respond to messages, others fear not being in the social loop. Called FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), teens obsessively check their media feeds for updates by friends as they don't want to miss out on jokes, activities, parties and gossip. FOMO is also known to lead to depression and anxiety while being a major contributor to teenagers' heavy use of social media.

Lowers Self-esteem

Constantly viewing their friends and even people they don't know having the time of their lives can be quite depressing. It makes them think that they're missing out on so many things while others are enjoying their lives. They follow a sort of "compare and despair" attitude. Judging others and themselves how they add up in the crowd is pretty unhealthy. Self-comparison in itself is a very destructive habit, lowering Self-esteem. It is also linked with other depressive mental symptoms.

Cyberbullying

Among other dangers of social networking sites for children include cybercrime and cyber bullying. Bullying is easier on social media platforms in the form of threatening messages or subtle posts with offensive content directed at a particular person. Younger children can also become targets of stalking by predatory individuals who intend to cause harm.

Hacking

Hackers can easily hack the personal data and other confidential information and share that on the Internet, which can make financial losses and loss to personal life.

Threat to Privacy and Reputation

Social media can easily ruin someone's reputation just by creating a false story and spreading across the social media. Privacy remains at stake, because of leakage of personal data and other confidential information to third parties by social networking sites (for example Facebook, Instagram)

Misinformation

Social media enables the circulation of false rumours and unreliable information. It also stimulates amateur medical advice and self-diagnosis of health problems which can be hazardous and life-threatening

Social Isolation

Many people naturally come to the conclusion that while social media is made to connect us even more, it actually separates us. People are constantly hooked on their phones, seeking a distraction. It drives more sadness than happiness. By constantly using Facebook as a distraction and to establish a feeling of connectedness, we achieve the exact opposite. The fact that people are able to instantly connect is pretty awesome, but in continuous use it actually brings a feeling of social isolation. The more time adolescents spend on social networking sites, the more social isolation they experience. This is a delusion that it elevates the mood.

Fraud and Scams

Deceiving innocent people is easily possible through social media. Several individuals have scammed and commit fraud through the social media.

Selfieholics

Selfies turned into the most prevalent thing with the arrival of camera phones or smart phones. Taking selfies every hour and posting it on social media is strongly linked to narcissism and can trigger obsessions with one's looks. Some selfieholics have been known to do risky things such as scale skyscrapers, pose with wild animals or weapons or stand close to moving vehicles such as trains to get a "cool" selfie which has ended fatally. Risky behaviour is also observed in teens as they participate in mass social media challenges that involve engaging in absurd or dangerous activities while filming themselves

Self-Image Issues

Psychologists have found plenty of evidence in numerous cultures, on how social media affects body image concerns. Social media sites provide tools that allow people to earn other's approval for their appearance and the possibility to compare themselves to others. Some also become anxious and moody as they see that the lives of their friends are better than theirs, even though they may know that their representation is idealized. Self-comparison in itself is a very destructive habit. Selfieholics and people who spend most of

their time posting and scrolling are the ones most vulnerable to this. Obsession with the self and posting endless updates and selfies on social media is also known to increase narcissism in youngsters. Their moods depend heavily on how appreciated their photos are on social media and go into anxiety when they don't get the attention they expect. Having their own pages makes kids more self-centred. Some vulnerable children would then live under the notion that everything revolves around them. This is a precursor to dysfunctional emotional conditions later in their life and a lack of empathy for others.

Risky Sexual Behavior

Young people are simply finding their sexuality. It is exceptionally typical for them to be occupied with everything sexual. However, the measure of sex in media today can make an adolescent befuddled. Sex without duty – that is by all accounts the message being radiated at adolescents. This can prompt untrustworthy sexual conduct and undesirable pregnancies.

Making Violence Normal

The amount of violence in video games and movies nowadays is frightening. And teenagers spend several hours every day viewing these scenes of blood. Violence becomes their reality. Many teenagers are unable to distinguish between reality and fantasy. This makes violence 'normal' for them.

Effect on Brain

Facebook and other social media platforms have had a negative effect on the brains of youngsters. It infantilizes their brains to a state alike to a child that gets allured to bright colours and buzzing noises while having a short attention span. It is often the case with social media effect on child development that having grown on superficial stimulus, children lack the ability to engage deeply with others and themselves.

Sleep Deprivation

Social media is among the leading causes of sleep deprivation in teens today. They remain always worried about what their friends are posting and sharing. Adolescents stay active on social for longer durations if not prompted to stop.

Poor Concentration

Different tasks, such as schoolwork, classwork or homework, require more concentration to deal with something significant but now teenagers have a habit of simultaneously using social

media. Most of them consider it multitasking but it is not. Researches show constant interruption has an adverse effect on the attention and reduces learning and performance.

Conclusion

Nowadays social media has become a part of life. There are many advantages to its use and people utilize the functions each and every day. Society has become so fixated on social media that they do not fully understand what they are opening themselves up to. Parents, educators, and everyday social media users must understand and be aware of the positive and negative connotations of social media usage in order to promote the healthy development of the youth in society. One social media site may not be harmful by itself, but the combination and prolonged use of social media can lead to harmful effects in development. Social media can have many positive aspects that keep users engaged and stimulated, but there can be many negative aspects as well that affect major dimensions of adolescent development. As a tool, social media is a double-edged sword; while it has many benefits, it has also influenced adolescents in various unhealthy ways. The way adolescents are using social media and its consequences on society in general and adolescents in particular are alarming. It seems that social media is controlling the lives of adolescents and not vice-versa. Social media is adversely affecting the adolescents. This is proving as a sweet poison, affecting them morally, mentally, socially, psychologically/ emotionally, physically, economically as well as academically. This is a grave concern. Technology should be for humans and not vice-versa. There is a need to look into the matter to save the future generation from the clutches of social networking sites/ social media.

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