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The Effects of Social Media on Teenagers

One can not escape the effects of social media on the world around them. Some positively use social media, to plug in with friends and to share precious memories with the world. Social media has brought people together, however, it has also torn people apart. Many sites bring about cyberbullying and cause self-esteem issues for the audience. Along with smaller problems, social media use can contribute to mental disorders such as ADHD and OCD. These effects have a higher prevalence in teens and young adults since their brains are still developing. Underneath the light-hearted use of social media, overlooked side effects run rampant. Due to the harmful nature of social media sites, there should be limits placed on teenage users.

Social media indirectly provides users with a negative self-image. As the audience, it is not possible to see the full scenario behind each post. The academic journal, *Probing the Coping Processes Between Social Media (WhatsApp) Addiction and Mental Health During Social Distancing*, proves the shift in self-image. On page two the author writes, “The link between social media addiction and psychological distress (e.g., depression, social anxiety) is well established” (Al-Busaidi 2). The correlation between intense social media use and negative image remains undeniable. When the user looks at a post thoughts of comparison run through their mind. A well-lighted, posed, and edited photo is bound to look practically perfect; however,

it is the perfection of these posts that causes the downfall of others. Many users, teen girls, in particular, compare themselves to these doctored images online. These girls will then notice the imperfections in themselves and the negative self-image will spiral from there. When an app designed to push certain ideas and lifestyles surrounds the mind of a self-conscious teenager, it can be very overwhelming for them. The overwhelming feeling of never being the perfect image that they are displayed takes a toll on the value that each teen puts on themselves. These feelings can be minimized if consistent exposure to social media is minimized. Through examining recent studies, there is no doubt that social media can create a negative self-image for teenage users.

Social media contributes to psychological disorders in young adults. There is a research-based increase in the number of diagnosed cases of ADHD, anxiety, and depression. An academic journal entitled *Problematic Social Networking Site Use-Effects on Mental Health and the Brain* proves the intense growth in these disorders. The article reads, “The studies reviewed so far have consistently shown evidence of comorbidity with psychiatric disorders such as depression, anxiety, OCD, stress and ADHD” (Weinstein 5). There have been multiple studies done on social media’s effect on the brain in recent years that have a common result, usage of social media sites worsens the psychiatric state. Users put a large amount of attention on these sites to the point where it can control the way that the user thinks and processes emotions. Overuse of social media can change the user’s perspective of the world. Using apps like TikTok and Instagram slowly changes the user’s attention span; instead of watching a ten-minute video, they are confronted by thousands of ten-second videos. The fast-paced style of entertainment releases small bursts of dopamine which makes the brain associate joy with fast-paced

entertainment. The change in attention span, along with the development of tics from social networking sites contributes to the development of disorders such as ADHD and OCD. The increase in diagnoses of these conditions has a positive relation to the increased usage of social apps. Through examining studies over the past decade, there is no doubt that social media is shifting the mental landscape and increasing mental disorders.

Although some believe that social media provides an overtly positive way to communicate, this is not the case. Many believe that social media is a lighthearted subject with minimal malicious outcomes, however, this is not true. A journal, *Benefits and Harms of Social Media Use: A Latent Profile Analysis of Emerging Adults*, highlights a positive view of social media. The article states, “. . .deeper engagement with personal social media content can facilitate connections with others, enhance self-knowledge, and increase a sense of connection between present and past selves . . .” (Keum 3). While an optimistic view of social media is pleasing to the ear, it is not the full picture. While websites such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter market themselves as a way to positively connect with your friends and family, it can bring about many negative issues. Children using social media at such a young age might not understand online boundaries, which results in them being vulnerable to online predators. Aside from the dangers of strangers, it is the desire to be included that puts teenagers at risk. The journal *Problematic Social Networking Site Use-Effects on Mental Health and the Brain* highlights the effects of “FOMO”, or fear of missing out, on teenagers. The author writes, “FOMO also predicted excessive smartphone use by female WhatsApp users and it was associated with the use of smartphones by American undergraduate students for social purposes” (Weinstein 3). The fear of social ostracization drives teenagers to obsess over the content on

social apps. Since users connect on these platforms, they feel that if they do not consistently check the apps for updates, they will miss something. Teenagers check in with their friends on these apps to ensure that they are still included. They fear that they might be excluded if they do not have enough followers or likes. Although this might sound extreme, it is the way of life for many teenagers around the globe. What starts as an intention to socialize with friends slowly becomes a void that causes the user anxiety and fear of ostracization. Through examining the life of a teenager, it is evident that social media is filled with negative consequences.

All in all, social media is a tool that we use every day. Whether we use sites to post or to catch up with friends, social networking sites remain prominent in every life and industry. When using social sites, teenagers should be monitored or have a set of guidelines for online. Consistent use of social media can cause a negative self-image and can increase stress. Along with these smaller issues, an increased probability of mental disorders, such as ADHD or OCD occurs. While these social platforms do have positive interactions, many leave teenagers feeling left out and never good enough. Through examining different academic journals, it is evident that social media has negative effects on teens.

Works Cited:

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