

The impact of time spent on Social Media on Teens

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Living as a teenager in the year 2017 is dramatically different than living as a teenager as close as 10 years ago. Social media is on the rise and about 92% of teens log on to social media daily (Atseff, Black, & Kaveney, 2016). An article posted by the Huffington Post earlier this year looked into how social media has changed, what it is like to grow up as a teenager in the year 2017 and for the future. The article covers four main topics: the change of relationships, parenting, the importance of being “liked”, and how social media opens new doors. All topics show the negatives and positives of social media.

First off, the article covers how face-to-face interactions has almost been removed and replaced with a media driven society (Atseff, Black, & Kaveney, 2016). One does not have to be in the same room as someone to be close via relationship with them. It is not uncommon for teens to gather in the same room, but all be sitting on their phones. However, a social media driven society has made it difficult to keep lives private. Teen’s lives are broadcasted which in turn has destroyed relationships, romantic and unromantic, have been destroyed in lieu of this (Atseff, Black, & Kaveney, 2016). It also makes it easier for bullying to occur, which is another negative impact.

Additionally, parenting a teen has changed due to this technological world. While social media does allow for family members to stay up to date on their family members, it leaves parents of these teens in fear of their child getting bullied or even addicted (Atseff, Black, & Kaveney, 2016). Parents too fear that their children who are looking to apply to colleges and future jobs will be harmed by social media being open to find information on anyone (Atseff, Black, & Kaveney, 2016). Parents are currently placed in between a generational gap of a social media driven society and a society that had none of this occurring while growing up.

Likewise, teens are striving to be “liked” through social media which seems to lead to higher self esteem and more friends in their eyes (Atseff, Black, & Kaveney, 2016). (But are these real friends and do they really “like” their posts?) Teens are able to view anyone at their fingertips all day long leaving them to compare themselves to others. This makes our world not only smaller, but increases the chances of teens having lower self-esteem during a time where self esteem is developing. Parents are left to deal with worrying about not only what their children are posting, but also if social media is impacting their sense of identity.

This topic stems back to HDFS, and especially the career path of becoming a school counselor because it is important to understand the way young children and adolescents are communicating. As a school counselor, if students are having issues with each other, it is important to understand where the issue is stemming from and often, it comes from social media. Specifically, social media relates back to Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory. His theory describes the microsystem, the immediate environment, mesosystem, the connections, exosystem, the indirect environment, macrosystem, the social and cultural values, and chronosystem, the changes over time. Social media impacts all of the systems in his theory. The first system is the smallest network from a social media standpoint and it works its way up to a larger network. By having school counselors understand what social media is and how it impacts others, students will respect and be able to communicate with them more openly.

Standards in teen’s lives have changed, and importantly, communication has changed dramatically. One must wonder, how is this social media driven society impacting our teens in the 21st century. Social media has become a burden and stressor onto our teens. On a daily basis, in social media jargon, teens worry about how many “likes” they receive, keeping up with their snapchat streak, responding to a direct message and much more. For many adults, they would be

confused by the lingo that was just reiterated, and that is because social media is a lingo in itself, it is a slang that our teens have created. Across all teens, the use of social media should be limited due to the impacts it has caused on self-esteem, privacy, and productivity. While we are constantly connected and are driven by the Internet, social media has become poison to our teens who are the future of our society.

Ultimately, social media has made it nearly impossible for teens in our society to have high self-esteem by allowing them to compare themselves to others in their age bracket constantly (O’Keffe, & Pearson, 2011). According to O’Keffe and Pearson (2011), who wrote a journal on the impacts of social media, 75% percent of teenagers owned a cell phone. And today, 80% of teens say they check their phone hourly, and 59% feel they are addicted to their phones (Wallace, 2016). It has been proven in a recent study that the more time spent on social media is correlated with a decrease in self-esteem (Ahmed, Jan, & Soomro, 2017). These teens strive to be someone they are not and try to change what they look like in order to receive more “likes” on a photo. Pressure is at an all time high, not only are hormones racing, but stressors such as relationships, fitting in, sports, applying to college, finding out who one is, and much more are racing through a teens head. On top of these stressors comes social media, where even if one is not enjoying what they are doing, they have to look like they are having a great time.

However, all of this information is nothing new. Social media is open for interpretation, according to a study from 11 years ago (Peter, Schouten, & Valkenburg 2006). The tone in which the teen interprets the feedback on social media platforms is what causes the impact on teens self-esteem (Peter, Schouten, & Valkenburg 2006). Peter, Schouten, and Valkenburg (2006) found that positive feedback increased self-esteem and negative feedback lowered it. In a more recent study, Ahmed, Jane, and Soomro (2017) found that most teens used an upward

social comparisons when using social media, which caused a decrease in self-esteem. Teens use these platforms to post about themselves, events they attend, or to brag in hopes of receiving positive feedback from their “friends”. This in return, creates a society full of teens who envy each other and the lives they live (Ahmed, Jan, & Soomro, 2017). While social media was created to make it easier to communicate, receive information, and to have relationships with other, it is unfortunate that social media does lead to lower self-esteem in lieu of one comparing themselves to others (Ahmed, Jan, & Soomro, 2017). Social media creates a feeling of inferiority and dissatisfaction within their own life (Ahmed, Jan, & Soomro, 2017). Eventually, this all can lead towards a downward spiral effect on to the lives of teens.

In addition to self-esteem, teens tend to not think of future repercussions of their posts on social media, which in turn can lead to a privacy issue (Boyd & Marwick, 2014). It is assumed that social media user’s know how to manage their privacy settings, and are encouraged to do so (Boyd & Marwick, 2014). Unfortunately, 48% of social media user’s have stated that they have trouble figuring out their privacy settings (Madden, 2012). Furthermore, research conducted in 2013 showed that only about 60% of teens feel confident in how to change privacy settings on their social media accounts (Beaton et al., 2013). This illustrates/shows that most social media profiles are exposed in some way shape or form. In Madden’s study (2012), 20% of social network users said their profile was completely public, which is frightening. In comparison to a study conducted by Horn, Hughes, and Jennette (2012) that found that about 32% of users did not take the time to change their privacy settings. While this number has decreased with time, it is still a large percentage. Future employers are able to access posts due to privacy settings being so difficult and social media users are putting out info for the world to see. This is putting teens in risk for their future.

Not only can anyone learn about someone via the Internet, but also possible employers see current posts has and is able to backtrack to those from years ago (Boyd & Marwick, 2014). Many teens have posts dated back to early middle school which includes comments on post's that at many times can get inappropriate and unacceptable (Boyd & Marwick, 2014). But what these teens that are on social media on a constant basis do not realize is that even if a post or photo is only set on privacy to be seen by three people, businesses are able to pay these companies to look into more detail (Boyd & Marwick, 2014). Future employers are able to find some connection via your friends list on social media sites (Horn, Hudges, & Jennette, 2012). Social media is interesting because when we participate in social media, we want to be public without actually being public (Boyd & Marwick, 2014). Additionally, about 83% of teens have over 300 friends on Facebook alone and what makes this more frightening, 100% of teens in this particular study reported they would accept anyone as a friend (Horn, Hudges, & Jennette, 2012). This redefines the term "friend" on a social network site (Horn, Hudges, & Jennette, 2012). It also makes it impossible to hide on the Internet (Boyd & Marwick, 2014). And interestingly enough, only about 9% of teens expressed being concerned with the privacy of their accounts (Beaton et al., 2013).

Equally important, the increase in use of social media creates more distractions available to the youth of our society. Facebook by itself has over 500 million users and about 55% to 82% of adolescents use it on a daily basis (Griffiths, & Kruss, 2011). It was found that the more use of personal social media led to poorer performance on tasks (Brooks, 2015). Interestingly enough, throughout a typical workday, a worker is interrupted about 28% of their workday, which is equivalent to about six to eight times a day (Brooks, 2015). This then leads to lower productivity in their performance due to time being allocated towards social media sources (Brooks, 2015).

Another study found, about 80% of teens check their phone hourly (Wallace, 2016). In turn, this large percentage leads to more time spent checking up on their social sources than actually focusing on the main task at hand (Brooks, 2015).

Equally, many schools are using social media to their advantage and as a tool for learning as well as communicating (Fewkes, & McCabe, 2012). It is important to note that there should be a clear understanding to the students between the educational use of social media sources and the entertainment value (Fewkes, & McCabe, 2012). Social networking sites have been proven to be used predominately for social purposes (Kuss, & Griffiths, 2011). In Fewkes and McCabe's (2012) study done on Facebook in schools, they found that between the ages of 12 and 17, 73% were users. Students have claimed that it has provoked a distraction in their life as well as increased procrastination and impacted their time management skills (Kuss, & Griffiths, 2011). It was found that classrooms that use social media lead to a negative impact for an individual (Brooks, 2015). In comparison to Fewkes and McCabe's study, students who believed it was not useful for education in turn believed that it was a distraction for students (2012). However, in a more recent study, Brooks (2015) concluded that more time spent on social media lead to a decrease in happiness and task performance and an increase in stress.

Suggestions for future research, social media is still a fairly new topic in our society and more research needs to be done in order to assess the true impact it has our on youth. Despite social media enhancing so fast, future research should look into the time teens spend on social media in comparison to the grades they receive. This will allow us to see if social media does impact grades and if the distraction is causing any harm. Additionally, research on social media amongst families would help us to understand if parents allowing their children to sit on social

media all day make an impact as well versus parents who do not. Not only will this give us more insight, but will allow us to change for the future.

As the research has indicated, the use of social media is a concern among teens due to the harmful impacts it has on not only individuals but on our society as a whole. The time spent on social media impacts the self-esteem, privacy and productivity of teens today due to the way it has become addictive. The heightened comparison to others on social networks and interpretations is what makes self-esteem plummet. Many teens do not think about the repercussions of not putting their social media accounts on private and most do not know how to control their privacy settings. And while schools are looking in to using social media to engage their students, many students feel and it has been proven that an increase use of social media has a negative impact on concentration. While our society has become social media driven, and has surely become a burden in our lives, is social media impacting the teens of the 21st century?

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