

Psychological Distress in Adolescents and Social Media Overuse: The Role of Demographic and Family Dynamics

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Abstract

Background: Among youth, overuse of social media has been linked to increased psychological distress such as depression, anxiety, and stress. How demographic variables and family processes affect such effects remains a gap that still requires exploration.

Objectives: To examine the impact of social media overuse on youth psychological distress, explore its moderating effects concerning demographic and family variables, and what adolescents' perceptions are of peer pressure, online validation, and cyberbullying.

Methodology: An exploratory sequential mixed-method design was used, combining quantitative surveys (DASS-21, PHQ-9, GAD-7) and qualitative semi-structured interviews. The sample size was 500 adolescents; data analysis was descriptive statistics, regression analysis, and thematic analysis.

Results: Social media overuse had a direct impact on psychological distress levels. Family relationships, specifically parental engagement, moderated these impacts. Qualitative findings identified peer pressure, cyberbullying, and online validation as key contributors to distress.

Conclusion: There are adverse effects on adolescent mental health from overuse of social media, for which family participation can act as a protective measure.

Interventions must include enhancing parental engagement and encouraging healthy social media usage.

Introduction

Social media has become an integral part of life for adolescents in the digital age, significantly impacting their social lives, self-image, and mental health. With the ever-ensconcing platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and YouTube, traditional ways of communicating have all but vanished, leaving the youth with their pros and cons. Based on Pew Research Center (2024), almost all teens 96% say they go online every day, with nearly half of them saying they go online "almost constantly" (Pew Research Center, 2024). This widespread connectivity highlights the need for insights into the complex effects of social media on teens' well-being.

Social Media Use Patterns and Prevalence Among Teens

However, the increase in the intensity of the use of social media through media by teenagers is startling. Most recent findings show more than half of U.S. teens spend at least four hours a day using digital screens, and many more than that (Fox5dc, 2024). This prevalence applies not only to the U.S. but also to the various parts of the world where adolescents are spending significant time connected through cyberspace, making it seem like a part of youth culture where communication is taking place. gender differences are also reflected in the patterns of Internet use of social media. Studies have shown that more adolescent females than males report lots of use, with 44% of 15-year-old girls in constant online contact with their friends, compared to lower male equivalents (WHO, 2024). Such greater connectivity for females may be attributed to social dynamics as well as content preferences available on platforms like Instagram and TikTok, which take into account visual presentation, peer validation, etc.

Mental Health Implications

The relationship between high use of social media and mental health issues in adolescents has been an area of great interest to researchers and health professionals. High screen time indicates a corresponding poor sleep habit, fatigue, and anxiety and depression symptoms (CDC, 2024). Adolescents are twice as likely to have mental health-related problems, such as depression and anxiety, if they spend more than three hours on social media sites per day (HHS, 2024). Neuroscientific evidence suggests that social media use during the period of age 10--19, which has been described as the most important developmental period, may induce specific changes to the brain, particularly for its emotional learning, impulse control, and emotional regulation functionality. This is a crucial step for Yale Medicine (2024) when it noted that this developmental period is so important for psycho-social aspects of development in an individual and how excessive exposure to social media could affect neuro-developmental pathways and consequences for later mental health in adolescents (Yale Medicine, 2024).

Social Comparison and Self-Esteem

Social media platforms tend to be important platforms for social comparison, where adolescents are exposed to the constructed images of their peers' lives. Such exposure may translate into negative self-evaluation and low self-esteem, mainly among teenagers and especially teenage girls. Cadenaser (2025) carried out a study in Spain where it was found that girls attribute more negative consequences from Instagram and TikTok than boys, as the latter perceived the pressure more with regard to physical appearance and social validation (Cadenaser, 2025). The ongoing exposure to ideal representations of images and lifestyles elicits feelings of inadequacy and heightens body image concerns.

Cyberbullying: An Ever-Present Threat

The rise of the social network has equally bred new forms of harassment, especially cyberbullying. About 15% of adolescents have reported experiences of cyberbullying, with reported cases increasing since 2018 (WHO, 2024). The anonymity of online platforms increases the magnitude of the impact of bullying behavior and creates substantial psychological anguish. Victims of cyberbullying suffer significantly heightened risks for depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation (PMC, 2024).

Parental involvement and family dynamics

These are crucial factors that can moderate the impact of social media on adolescents. Parental monitoring and the environment for open communication serve as protective factors that reduce other negative impacts of social media overuse (APA, 2024). Thus, parental disengagement may act to enhance the negative effects of excessive screen time.

Policy Interventions and Educational Initiatives

In light of growing concern, policymakers and educators are presently considering ways to tackle the issues surrounding adolescent social media use. For example, Connecticut's proposed HB 6857 is an act aimed at improving parental oversight while minimizing the exposure of minors to harmful content (CT INSIDER, 2025). These kinds of legislative efforts mean that more people recognize the need for systemic intervention to protect youth in the digital world. Digital literacy initiatives are also starting to get attention. Programs that raise awareness of some of the dangers of social media, risks of cyberbullying, and the dangers of social comparison are another crucial facet of a holistic approach to adolescent digital wellness.

Objectives

1. To assess the effect of excessive use of social media on teenage mental well-being, targeting depression, anxiety, and levels of stress by employing standardized psychological tests.
2. To examine the role of demographic and family processes in moderating the association between social media activity and psychological distress.
3. To examine how adolescents experience online validation, peer pressure, and cyberbullying using qualitative evidence from semi-structured interviews.
4. To evaluate quantitative and qualitative results for a holistic understanding of how social media affects teen well-being.

Literature Review

Effects of Social Media on Teenagers' Mental Health

Adolescent involvement in social media elevates serious concerns about its mental health effects. Social media facilitates new channels of communication and new forms of social interaction, and in turn, these changes have dynamically shifted socialization patterns among adolescents, and with the change comes consequences. Research points to increased social media use being associated with various mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, and stress (Rosen, Whaling, & Carrier, 2018; Kuss & Griffiths, 2020). Adolescents are most prone to the negative effects of social media during a delicate developmental period, whereby their self-esteem and acceptance become fundamental for their emotional and psychological well-being (Miller, 2021).

A key issue in this relationship is said to be the so-called process of social comparison. Not only do adolescents experience feelings of inferiority or inadequacy, depression, and anxiety due to high levels of social comparison, but extreme criticism also leaves them feeling rejected (Fardouly, Diedrichs, Vartanian, & Halliwell, 2019; Anuradha & Prasad, 2022; Jan et al.(2025)). Idealized depictions of life, success, and beauty on the platforms, such as Instagram or TikTok, will cause adolescents to question their worth (Fardouly et al., 2020).

Psychological Distress and Social Media Use

The relationship between social media use and mental health distress has been documented using several measures of psychology. Considerable studies have used the DASS-21 scale (Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scale-21) and PHQ-9 (Patient Health Questionnaire-9) to report levels of depression, anxiety, or stress among adolescents (Borys et al., 2020). Studies have shown evidence that increased levels of social media use correspond to increased amounts of psychological distress. For example, Research by Choi et al. (2020) showed that adolescents who are more active on social media indicate higher anxiety and depression symptoms. The negative consequences of social media on mental health are often worsened for adolescents because these two factors disrupt their sleep, especially due to late-night usage, leading to

augmented stress and emotional instability (Rehman et al.(2021); Khattak et al. ,(2021);Woods & Scott, 2019).

The meta-analysis carried out by Best, Manktelow, and Taylor (2019) showed that adolescents with higher social media use had a greater risk of developing depressive and anxiety disorders. It reaffirmed that such effects were pronounced among females, thereby suggesting an important role of gender differences in the linkage of social media with adolescent mental health. Yet another recent observation by Kuss and Griffiths (2020) noted that internet addiction aggravates the psychological consequences of social media use; longer exposure to the social media site might lead to compulsive behavior, which negatively impacts adolescent health and well-being.

Family Dynamics Influence the Role of Social Media in Adolescents' Lives

The family determines most of the behaviors of adolescents regarding the connections with other teenagers through social networks and the psychological effects that follow. Such involvement, particularly parental regulation of media use, acted as an enhanced protective factor to promote health. According to Wang, Lutz, and Hu (2020), jurisdictions and communicating parental monitoring with the use of social media were found to pair better mental well-being outcomes in an adolescent. However, adolescents with reportedly lower parental engagement in their digital media consumption showed higher levels of emotional distress, indicating that family dynamics are crucial in the supportive role they play in moderating the pernicious effects of social media. (Youn, 2019).

Also important for shaping adolescent media use and mental health outcomes is the family structure. Adolescents living with a single parent would probably not receive any supervision and guidance regarding the use of these social media tools-they may very well be at risk of damage from it because there is no adult supervision. Adolescents from two-parent households with higher levels of parental support and communication are better equipped to manage the social media pressures and the negative influences it may have on their mental health (Frison & Eggermont, 2020).

Socioeconomic Status and Mental Health Outcomes

Socioeconomic status is one major variable influencing adolescent use of social media and its psychological effects. Findings suggest that adolescents with lower SES may use social media excessively to cope with feelings of social isolation or economic difficulties (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2020).

These teens are also at a higher risk of being victims of cyberbullying, an issue on social media that increases their depression and anxiety levels (Davison et al., 2020). In their turn, SES can continue to influence the perception and experience of social media for adolescents. More SES-advantaged adolescents might have access to superior resources, such as mental health care, which might operate to buffer them against some negative effects of social media (Frison & Eggermont, 2020). On the contrary, lower SES adolescents have lesser exposure to such resources and consequently experience more stress from both offline and online origins, hence higher psychological distress (Kross et al., 2021).

Psychological impact of cyberbullying

Cyberbullying has been serious, particularly for teenagers, since they are at a higher risk of encountering depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts. A study by Kowalski et al. (2020) showed that cyberbullying occurs more frequently in teenagers who use social media a lot. The causes of the development of cyberbullying are widespread social networking, online anonymity, and long-term psychological effects, according to Patchin and Hinduja (2020).

Having then been bullied by any medium of bullying, including cyberspace, places those teenagers at heightened risk of developing mental illness: here, depression, anxiety, and

suicidal ideation (Kowalski et al. 2020; Singh et al. 2021). Cyberbullying has an even more pervasive negative impact on mental health than other expressions of bullying, largely owing to the public and very long-lasting nature of this cyber harassment. Such observations hence demonstrate the emergent need to have such intervention targeted towards coping with cyberbullying taking place in cyberspace, as well as providing intervention to all hurt adolescents.

Interventions and Protective Factors

Even though the overuse of social media threatens adolescent mental health, various protective factors and interventions can counter those risks. One such example is digital literacy. Teaching adolescents to critique social media content may lessen the negative effects of social comparison, thereby promoting a healthier perspective toward social media (Frison & Eggermont, 2020). Furthermore, alongside encouraging positive parental involvement, parental communication regarding social media use is effective in sintering the negative effects of online engagement (Wang et al., 2020).

Interventions that focus on sleep pattern and reducing screen time prior to bedtime may also diminish some of the psychological distress that comes with social media overuse (Woods & Scott, 2019). Also, mental health professionals are now beginning to integrate social media management into therapy sessions with adolescents, empowering them to navigate the digital world without affecting their mental health (Youn, 2019).

Methodology

Study Design

The study utilized a mixed-methods design following a Convergent Parallel Design, combining quantitative survey research with qualitative semi-structured interviews. Both data collections were done simultaneously, and their findings were analyzed separately. A cross-sectional design was employed to evaluate the interrelation among social media excessive use, psychological distress, and demographic and family dynamic moderating effects. Mixed-methods research maximizes validity through triangulation of statistical correlations with rich qualitative findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The design facilitated extensive data gathering and deep understanding of teenagers' experiences (Johnson et al., 2019).

Study Population and Sampling

Target Population

The target population was adolescents aged between 12 and 19 years, since this age group demonstrates greater usage of social media and has a higher vulnerability to psychological distress (Twenge et al., 2020).

Inclusion Criteria:

- ☐ Adolescents spend at least two hours a day on social media.
- ☐ Participants with different socioeconomic backgrounds and family setups.
- ☐ Adolescents with parental permission (for those under the age of 18)

Exclusion Criteria:

- ☐ Teenagers diagnosed with severe pre-existing mental illnesses (unless controlled) (March et al., 2019). Teenagers used mobile less than 2 hours daily

Sampling Technique

Stratified random sampling was employed to provide sufficient representation by gender (male, female, non-binary), socioeconomic status (low, middle, high), and family type (nuclear, single-parent, joint family). Stratified

sampling enhances generalizability and statistical power by equilibrating subgroup representation (Etikan & Bala, 2018).

Sample Size Calculation

According to past research, a sample size of 500 adolescents was calculated using G*Power analysis with a 95% confidence level and 80% power (Faul et al., 2019).

Data Collection Methods

(A) Quantitative Data Collection: Survey-Based Approach

A standardized self-reported survey was conducted online (Google Forms, Qualtrics) and in educational departments.

1. Social Media Usage Assessment

The Social Media Addiction Scale (SMAS) was applied (Andreassen et al., 2020). Screen time per day and favorite sites (Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, etc.) were documented. Exposure to content (entertainment, peer interaction, news, or validation-seeking behavior) was measured (Bányai et al., 2019).

2. Psychological Distress Measurement

The Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-21) was used (Osman et al., 2019). The Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) was utilized for depressive symptoms (Manea et al., 2019). The Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD-7) was employed to assess the level of anxiety (Plummer et al., 2019).

3. Family and Demographic Dynamics

Family type was categorized as Nuclear, Single-parent, or Extended family. Parent involvement was graded as Low, Moderate, or High. Socioeconomic status (SES) was determined according to parental education and household income (Lemay et al., 2019).

Qualitative Data Collection: Semi-Structured Interviews

50 parents and adolescents were interviewed with open-ended questions to ask about: Parent perceptions of adolescent use of social media (Odgers & Jensen, 2020). Family discussion of digital consumption (Keles et al., 2020). Adolescent experiences of peer pressure, online validation, and cyberbullying (Orben et al., 2020). Audio-recorded interviews were transcribed and coded using NVivo software for thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Data Analysis

(A) Quantitative Analysis

Through the use of R & SPSS, the following methods were used:

- 1. Descriptive Statistics** – Mean, Standard Deviation, and Frequencies were obtained.
- 2. Correlation Analysis** – Social media use and psychological distress relationships were measured (Keles et al., 2020).
- 3. Multiple Regression Analysis** – Predictive relationships were identified (Orben et al., 2019).
- 4. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)** – The causal linkages among social media overuse, mental health, and family functioning were established (Byrne, 2020).

(B) Qualitative Analysis

Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021) was applied to code interview responses into themes. Triangulation was employed to cross-validate consistency among survey and interview findings (Flick, 2018).

Ethical Considerations

This research complied with the Declaration of Helsinki (2018) and received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval.

- **Informed Consent:** Was taken from participants and parents (if under 18 years old).
- **Confidentiality:** Personal identifiers were stripped, and data were safely stored.
- **Withdrawal Policy:** Participants were allowed to opt out at any time without consequence.

Results

1. Quantitative Findings

1.1 Description Sample

Characteristic	Category	Percentage / Value
Sample Size		500 adolescents
Mean Age		15.8 years (SD = 2.3)
Gender Representation	Male	48%
	Female	50%
	Non-binary	2%
Socioeconomic Status	Low-income	30%
	Middle-income	45%
	High-income	25%
Family Type	Nuclear family	55%
	Single-parent family	30%
	Joint family	15%
Social Media Usage	Average Daily Use	4.2 hours (SD = 1.8 hours)

1.2 Social Media Usage Patterns

Patterns of Social Media Use

Finding	Percentage
Respondents with social media problems (addiction-like traits)	30%
TikTok usage among participants	75%
Instagram usage among participants	68%
Snapchat usage among participants	50%
Moderate to severe depression (PHQ-9)	41%
Moderate to severe anxiety (GAD-7)	37%
High stress symptoms (DASS-21)	47%

While the SMAS was used to score the subjects, it was shown that 30% of respondents suffer from social media problems, which can be rated as having addiction-like traits ($p < 0.05$).

Adolescents from single-parent families used significantly more social media ($M = 4.7$ hours/day, $p < 0.01$) than adolescents from nuclear ($M = 3.8$ hours/day) and joint families ($M = 3.5$ hours/day).

The top three applications used were TikTok (75%), Instagram (68%), and Snapchat (50%). These findings corroborate Bányai et al. (2019), who found that greater screen-time application was associated with greater emotional dependence on social media among adolescents.

1.3 Psychological Distress Assessment

From the scales DASS-21, PHQ-9, and GAD-7, we have:

Measure	Percentage (%)	Significance (p-value)
Depression (PHQ-9)	41%	$p < 0.001$
Anxiety (GAD-7)	37%	$p < 0.001$
Stress (DASS-21)	47%	$p = 0.050$

These findings are in congruence with researchers Orben et al. (2019) and Keles et al. (2020), restricting their association between poor adolescent mental health and excessive social media use.

1.4 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlations were calculated between screen time and psychological distress measures

Variable Pair	r	p-value
Screen time & Depression (PHQ-9)	.52	< 0.001
Screen time & Anxiety (GAD-7)	.47	< 0.001
Screen time & Stress (DASS-21)	.49	< 0.001
SMAS & Depression	.50	< 0.001
SMAS & Anxiety	.42	< 0.001

1.5 Multiple Regression Analysis

The analysis used multiple linear regression to predict depression (PHQ-9 scores) based of:

- Screen time, Parental Involvement, Family Type, SES, and SMAS scores

Predictor	β	p-value
Screen Time (hrs/day)	0.31	< 0.001
SMAS Score	0.28	< 0.001
Single-Parent Family (dummy coded)	0.25	0.002
Low Parental Involvement	0.34	< 0.001
SES (low)	0.21	0.015

Model: $F(5, 494) = 19.78$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.44$

1.6 Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

Structural Equation:

$$MH = \alpha + \beta_1(SMU) + \beta_2(PI) + \beta_3(SMU \times PI) + \varepsilon$$

Where:

- **MH** = Mental Health (latent variable combining PHQ-9, GAD-7, DASS-21)
- **SMU** = Social Media Use (observed: Hours/day + SMAS score)
- **PI** = Parental Involvement
- **SMU \times PI** = Interaction term (moderating effect)
- **ε** = Error term

Model Fit Indicators:

- χ^2 (df = 73) = 129.64, $p < 0.001$
- CFI = 0.94
- TLI = 0.92
- RMSEA = 0.048

These measures attest that the SEM model exhibits an acceptable to good fit according to universally accepted standards (Byrne, 2020).

Results of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

SEM was performed to establish the causal relationships among social media overuse and mental health and family dynamics.

-Direct Effect: Excessive use of social media predicted greater scores of depression and anxiety ($p < 0.01$).

-Moderating Effect: In fact, high involvement of parents mitigated the unfavorable effects of social media on adolescent well-being ($\beta = -0.27$, $p < 0.05$), while low involvement whetted the similar effects ($\beta = 0.39$, $p < 0.01$).

This adds to the affirmations by Odgers & Jensen, who emphasized the protective role played by the family in the education of adolescents regarding digital consumption.

2. Qualitative Findings (Thematic Analysis)

50 adolescents, along with their parents, were interviewed using semi-structured methods that were analyzed using NVivo software and Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis (2021). Three dominant themes were derived:

2.1 Parental Concerns About Social Media Use

Parents worry about:

Difficulties with regulating screen time: "I try to limit their phone use, but they always find a way to use it longer" (Mother, age 42).

Negative content exposure: "My child gets anxious from constantly watching distressing news on TikTok" (Father, age 39). These concerns are corroborated by Keles et al. (2020) in the discovery that being exposed to social media without restriction causes an increase in anxiety.

2.2 An Adolescent Perspective on Peer Pressure and Online Validation

71% Adolescents reported pressure from peers to be online so as not to miss any social activities.

56% Adolescentssaid they feel validated by 'likes' and comments on their social media posts.

Online comparisons added to their feelings of inadequacy and depressive symptoms, especially among females. The results support the work of Orben et al. (2019), who posited that adolescents tend to associate their self-esteem with their activity on social media.

2.3 Cyberbullying & Its Psychological Impact

- 23% of respondents indicated having been victims of cyberbullying, predominantly on Instagram and TikTok.

- Teenagers who were harassed with greater extents of online abuse indicated higher anxiety levels ($p < 0.01$).

- - Most teenagers observed the ignorance of their parents in such cyber traumatizations, further clouding their situation. These observations are in tandem with Odgers & Jensen (2020), who emphasized the toll cyberbullying causes to adolescent mental well-being.

Summary of Key Findings

Variable	Key Findings	Supporting Studies
Social Media Use	30% exhibit problematic use; 75% use TikTok most	Bányai et al. (2019)
Depression (PHQ-9)	41% show moderate-severe levels	Orben et al. (2019)
Anxiety (GAD-7)	37% show moderate-severe levels	Keles et al. (2020)
Stress (DASS-21)	47% report significant stress	Keles et al. (2020)
Parental Involvement	High involvement reduces social media's negative effects	Odgers & Jensen (2020)

Discussion

This study explored how overuse of social media leads to psychological distress among teenagers, especially depression, anxiety, and stress. Higher psychological distress is discovered to be connected with overuse of social media, leading to depression, anxiety, and stress. This supports existing studies that have indicated social media use might be detrimental to the mental health of teenagers (Liu et al., 2020; Cummings et al., 2021). On the other hand, the quantitative analysis corroborated that adolescents who spent more time on social media exhibited more psychological distress. This is consistent with studies by Slater et al. (2019), who found positive correlations between excessive usage of social media and increased symptoms of depression and anxiety. And the findings by DASS-21, PHQ-9, and GAD-7 employed in this study are in line with some earlier studies confirming excessive social media use as one of the causative factors behind the emergence of mental health disorders (Frison & Eggermont, 2020; Coyne et al., 2021). Not only this, but we were also presented with clear signs that the kind of psychological distress that arises as a result of social media use was the other dimension that qualitative interviews surfaced concerning young people. The most dominant themes encountered were peer pressure, the desire for online validation, and exposure to cyberbullying. All these identified measures could compare closely with what Bányai et al. (2019) reported: that social comparisons and cyberbullying were strong predictors of depression and anxiety in adolescents with high usage of social media. Additionally, the issue of "fear of missing out," or FOMO, has proven to be a considerable player in producing anxiety and depression the same as emerging results have found previously (Nesi et al., 2020; Satıcı et al., 2020). Yet another interesting finding of the research was how demographic and family factors moderate the relationship between social network use and mental health. The study revealed that youth from lower socioeconomic status and with less parental support reported greater levels of psychological distress. This is understandably in line with the research activity of Kuss et al. (2021), who found that lower socioeconomic status can compound adverse effects of social media use on the wellbeing of adolescents. Further, the protective function of parental engagement cited in the research has been replicated by Odgers and Jensen (2020), who discussed the reasons why parental supervision is necessary to counter against the adverse consequences of social media on the mental wellbeing of youths. Teenagers with greater parental involvement showed lower levels of distress, supporting the role of family relationships in safeguarding against online threats to mental health. In regard to the type of social media sites, it was found in this research that socially engaging sites, like Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat, were the most powerful drivers of distress among adolescents. The results are in line with Fardouly et al.'s (2020) work, showing that especially, visual social media platforms are especially related to negative body image and greater social comparison, both predictors of depression and anxiety. Recurrent themes running through the interviews included maintaining an ideal image, pursuing likes, followers, and validation. It has been demonstrated that these behaviors increase anxiety, especially among adolescents with a tendency toward social comparison and low self-esteem (Tiggemann & Slater, 2021; Perloff, 2021). In addition, this study confirms the direct as well as indirect effects of social media use on adolescent psychological distress through the application of statistical procedures such as regression analysis and structural equation modeling (SEM). This finding is in line with the work of past studies wherein SEMs were utilized (for example, that of Kuss et al., 2021) by finding support for social comparison and online bullying as mediators between social media use and mental health outcomes. Besides, multiple regression analysis shows that social media overuse greatly influences the increase in anxiety and depression, similar to what Coyne et al. (2021) found in their sample of adolescents. The effects of online environments on teenage

mental health have emerged as a burgeoning area of research. The present study adds to the existing literature on the role of social media in influencing psychological outcomes. While existing research has tended to emphasize the individual characteristics of social media usage, the present study emphasizes the significance of both demographic variables and platform-level features in capturing the overall effect of social media. The integrated quantitative-qualitative approach of integrating quantitative data and qualitative interviews provides a more holistic view of the way adolescents feel and think about the impact of social media on their mental well-being.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study have various policy, parental, and educational implications. Perhaps most critically is the implication that parental involvement might counteract the detrimental impacts of social media on teenagers. This is in line with the recommendations of studies by Odgers and Jensen (2020) and Satici et al. (2020), which emphasize parents monitoring and setting limits on social media use. Particularly, school programs that focus on increasing digital literacy and promoting healthy social media use can help adolescents better navigate online spaces. Furthermore, promoting offline activities such as physical exercise or hobbies can potentially offer a buffer against the psychological damage of social media. The report also suggests that policymakers need to consider the contribution of social media sites towards mitigating the likely adverse impacts of digital platforms. Controls on features to reduce addictive portrayals, like the endless scrolling feature or harmful content priority, could have a significant role to play in improving teen digital well-being (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2017). In addition, social media platforms can be encouraged to implement more robust measures to protect users from cyberbullying and abusive interactions, as these are strong predictors of adolescent distress (Slater et al., 2019).

Limitations and Future Research

Although this research has contributed somewhat, there are certain limitations. First, the reliance on self-reported data has the potential to introduce biases since participants might under-report or over-report both their usage of social media and symptoms of mental illness because of social desirability or recall bias. Subsequent research can consider employing more objective measures, like mobile phone app data that indicates screen use, to capture a better picture of how teens use social media. Furthermore, the cross-sectional nature of the study limits the ability to make causal inferences. Longitudinal studies are needed to examine the long-term effects of social media usage on the mental health of adolescents and to examine the mediational role of self-esteem and social support. Finally, further research should examine whether individual variation, such as gender, ethnicity, and personality, may differentially affect social media use and subsequent mental health consequences. For instance, females may be more susceptible to body concerns and social comparison when social media is used (Fardouly et al., 2020), whereas males may develop more stress when playing video games or acting aggressively in cyberspaces (Tiggemann & Slater, 2021).

Conclusions

The purpose of this research was to investigate the impact of social media overuse on psychological distress among adolescents, measuring depression, anxiety, and stress levels and demographic/family dynamics influencing such an impact. Results indicated a clear-cut and significant association between social media overuse and psychological distress in adolescents. Results obtained in the present study corroborate with the recent literature emphasizing the possible risks of excess screen time, especially among vulnerable adolescent groups. The quantitative study revealed that the higher the hours spent on social media (especially Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok), the higher the scores obtained by adolescent users on standardized measures of depression (PHQ-9), anxiety (GAD-7), and stress

(DASS-21). It thus corroborates findings from earlier studies showing social media use is directly associated with mental health disorders like anxiety and depression (Orben et al., 2019; Keles et al., 2020). Social comparison and validation-seeking behavioral tendencies on mostly image-oriented platforms seem to be strong factors toward the psychological burden confronted by adolescents, and back up findings from previous work connecting social media use to an increased sense of inadequacy and lowered self-esteem (Fuchs et al., 2020).

Moreover, this research sought to illuminate the role of family dynamics, especially parental involvement, as an important moderator in the association between adolescents' social media and mental health. Most prominently, adolescents with increased concern from parents about their online activities reported feeling problems, indicating that support and attention in parenting could be a protective measure. Earlier research has pointed out this finding, which suggests the importance of family dynamics and communication in reducing social media's adverse effects (Odgers & Jensen, 2020). They found that family structure, inclusive of family type (nuclear, single-parent, extended), affects mental health outcomes in that adolescents from less supportive family environments were more distressed than their counterparts. Thus arises the complex, multifactorial nature of the relationships produced in mental health by social media, with the necessity of measuring impacts at individual and environmental levels.

Focus groups and interviews with adolescents revealed more valuable insights into their experiences with social media, including prominent themes such as peer pressure, online bullying, and constant online validation, and how they increased stress and anxiety levels. Adolescents say they feel pressured to project perfect images of themselves online, leading them to be anxious, doubtful, and out of control regarding their digital identities. These results match previous research emphasizing peer pressure and bullying online as the bases of mental health troubles for young social media users (Marino et al., 2020).

This study combined qualitative and quantitative approaches and gave a more thorough exploration of the subject: statistical proof of the link between social media overuse and mental health distress, and detailed personal testimonies of the experiences of adolescents. The mixed-methods approaches are excellent in showing how complex the phenomenon is and constructing a complete picture of how adolescents' use of social media impacts their health.

The study has its limitations. As a result of a cross-sectional design, it does not allow for causal inferences to be made from observations of the relationship between the independent factor of social media use and mental health outcomes. Furthermore, self-reported data may be subject to bias, such as social desirability or memory failure to recall adequately, in social media use and symptoms of depression. Longitudinal designs to record changes over time or more objective measures of social media use would help alleviate some of these limitations in future studies. This study adds to the body of evidence about the negative effects of overusing social media on adolescents' mental health. Moreover, it shows the major role, especially of family dynamics-including parental involvement, moderating these effects. The findings, in light of the presence of social media in the lives of adolescents, call for intervention programs aimed at changing social media habits that promote healthy family engagement in digital practices. Such measures could prove important in the context of rising issues of mental health among youths in an increasingly digitized world. Indeed, future research must continue addressing the need to understand the complex relationships between social media use, family dynamics, and mental health so that it can base proven strategies in supporting adolescents' well-being in the digital age.

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