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Can Excessive Use of Social Media Contribute to addictive behaviors or mental health issues?

Throughout the years, we have seen a rise in social media use among adolescents. Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and Tik Tok are among the most popular social media platforms out there right now for teens. One problem with social media is that it can be highly addictive, with many spending hours at a time on these platforms. To clarify, “according to a recent poll, 22% of teenagers log on to their favorite social media site more than 10 times a day, and more than half of adolescents log on to a social media site more than once a day” (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2011). In addition, there seems to be a correlation between substance abuse and social media.

Many people on social media, especially adolescents are influenced easily to drink at a younger age or partake in drugs because it is being posted on these platforms. To support this, “a study conducted by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University found that teenagers who regularly use popular social media outlets were more likely to drink, use drugs, and buy tobacco than adolescents who either did not use social media or used it less frequently” (Hilliard, 2019). As a result, it causes peer pressure among adolescents to do what is considered “cool” on social media. Social media has had many impacts on its users, especially young adolescents. Some of which are negative such as low self-esteem, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, problems socializing in school, etc. With the freedom that social media provides to its users, we are seeing more problems that are occurring because of it.

For instance, “recent research indicates that there are frequent online expressions of offline behaviors, such as bullying, clique-forming, and sexual experimentation, that have introduced problems such as cyberbullying, privacy issues, and sexting” (American Academy of Pediatrics). Even today, social media is still an ongoing problem among adolescents. Another problem that we are seeing with social media is mental health issues. For example, “recent studies referenced by The Child Mind Institute and The National Center for Health Research suggest people who frequently use social media feel more depressed and less happy with life than those who spend more time on non-screen-related activities” (Stabler, 2021). This is because when we scroll through pictures on social media platforms, we are seeing unrealistic, photoshopped, filtered images that adolescents are thinking that they should look like or be doing.

Social media is a complex problem because it is one where many researchers have tried to solve and explain the effects of it, but none are able to stop it from happening. Everyday, there are people who go onto social media and compare themselves to others, which affects a person’s mental health as well as physical. Also, the problem with social media can be looked at from two or more disciplines. This is because social media is such a complex area that multiple disciplines are able to contribute to solving the problem by offering their ideas and insights based on their respective discipline. Overall, the negative effects of social media are still unresolved problems in society.

References

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