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The Influence of Social Media on the Mental Health of Teenagers

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Abstract. Among teenagers, the prevalence of social media is on the rise. Its influence on their mental health has emerged as a significant concern in recent years. Teenagers are among the most active users of social media platforms, and these platforms have become an essential element of their daily existence. However, while social media offers benefits, they are also associated with certain mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression. This study focuses on the link between social media use and adolescent mental health issues and uses carefully planned surveys to obtain relevant information. It aims to provide useful guidance to improve social media use and help young people adapt to the digital environment. The study also highlights the importance of educating young people about the reasonable use of the Internet to engage in social media in a balanced way and create external conditions that contribute to their mental health in an online environment.

Keywords: social media, adolescent mental health, anxiety, depression

1. Introduction

1.1. Research background

Currently, social networks have penetrated all areas of young people's lives and play a central role in this digital space. According to information released by the China Internet Information Center, young people make up the majority of the users of major social networks. They are extremely active on different platforms and spend a lot of time reading, browsing and communicating with different content. The frequent use of social media by young people is causing increasing concern about their mental health. Recent research has shown that over-investing in social media can negatively impact the mental health of adolescents [1]. Observations have shown that teens who have been immersed in social media for a long time are more prone to anxiety and depression. Once they see posts that are carefully designed to show other people's ideal lives, they may feel lost and their self-esteem will be violated. They will compare themselves with others and determine if they have shortcomings. In addition to that, there is also cyberbullying on social networks and this situation can contribute to the rise of mental health problems in adolescents [2]. Therefore, it is crucial to understand how social media use is related to the mental health of teenagers. After identifying the various factors that cause the negative effects, we can try to reduce the risks and help young people use social media in a healthy way.

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1.2. Research significance

Theoretical Significance: This study sheds light on the tricky connection between the impact of social media on the mental health of adolescents. It is very important to help them learn healthy and sensible ways to use social media to increase their sense of well-being [3]. This gave a lot of room to think about future research and actions.

Practical Significance: Through this research, we can offer scientific guidance to parents, schools, and society. It helps them understand how to support teenagers in using social media healthily. The study also highlights effective ways to prevent and intervene in potential psychological problems that may arise from excessive or inappropriate social media use [4]. These insights are crucial for creating a supportive environment for teenagers' mental well-being.

2. Literature review

2.1. Positive impacts of social media on mental health

Social Support: Social media offers teenagers a wide range of social opportunities. It allows them to maintain close connections with friends and classmates, sharing the ups and downs of life. Through positive social interactions, they can gain emotional support and a strong sense of belonging, which can effectively help to reduce feelings of loneliness and stress among teenagers [5].

Knowledge Acquisition and Self-Improvement: The vast array of information on social media serves as a treasure trove for teenagers, unlocking doors to learning and personal development. By subscribing to diverse professional accounts, they can not only gain valuable knowledge but also broaden their horizons, explore new hobbies, and ultimately boost their self-confidence and sense of self-efficacy [6].

2.2. Negative impacts of social media on mental health

Anxiety and Depression: Excessive engagement with social media has been found to be closely linked to increased rates of anxiety and depression in teenagers. Social media is filled with carefully selected and beautified displays of life, which can easily lead to self-comparison and feelings of inferiority among teenagers [7]. When they see others' seemingly perfect lives, they often unconsciously compare their own lives with them, leading to anxiety and depression.

Cyberbullying: Cyberbullying is a prominent issue that seriously harms teenagers' mental health due to social media. Compared with traditional school bullying, cyberbullying has the characteristics of strong concealment, fast spread, and wide influence, causing more severe psychological damage to victims [8].

Sleep Problems: Delaying teens until late and using social media will negatively affect their sleep. Many people play with their mobile phones before going to bed. The blue light emitted by the mobile phone screen affects the production of sleep hormones in the body, facilitating sleepiness. Total sleep time decreases, and this causes fatigue in the morning [9].

2.3. Summary of literature review

The impact of social media on adolescent mental health is complex and diverse, with a number of factors having both positive and negative consequences. For example, social media gives young people the opportunity to connect with a wide range of people, meet different cultures, and experience a certain sense of support when they talk about not overestimating their actions and

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staying in touch with the world around them. But you cannot ignore its significant shortcomings. The behavior of young people seeking excellence online can easily cause extreme anxiety, especially when comparing themselves to others and showing self-denial. The problem of cyberbullying is serious, causes long-lasting emotional pain to young people and negatively affects their mental health. If young people spend too much time on social media, they are prone to addiction-like behavior, which will affect their academic performance, physical health, and real friendships. The interweaving of positive and negative factors makes it difficult to study the relationship between social media and Adolescent Mental Health. Such a status quo implies the need for more detailed and comprehensive research methods. By digging deeper, researchers can get to the truth and find ways in which young people can use social media to promote mental health.

3. Research methods

3.1. Questionnaire survey design

Research Purpose: This study aims to dig into how social media use ties to anxiety and depression in teens through a questionnaire survey. It wants to see how different ways of using social media can affect teens' mental health, giving us important data to analyze and come up with ways to help.

Questionnaire Content: The questionnaire includes the following aspects:

• Basic Information: Age, gender, grade, etc.

• Social Media Use: Frequency of use, daily usage time, commonly used platforms, etc.

• Mental Health Status: Simple questions to assess anxiety, depression, self-esteem, and other psychological issues.

Questionnaire Distribution and Recovery: The questionnaire was sent out through social media and school class groups. We got a 90% return rate, with 90 out of 100 questionnaires coming back successfully.

3.2. Sample selection

Sample Source: The samples were mainly recruited from netizens through social media platforms and school class groups, covering teenagers from different regions and age groups.

Sample Characteristics: The sample included teenagers aged 13-18, with 45 boys and 45 girls. In terms of social media usage habits, 20% of the teenagers used social media for less than 1 hour per day, 60% used it for 1-3 hours, and 20% used it for more than 3 hours.

3.3. Data analysis methods

Descriptive statistical analysis: A detailed statistical analysis of the answers to each question is carried out to understand the underlying situation.

Correlation Analysis: There is a link between the frequency and duration of social media use and psychological problems such as anxiety and depression [10]. Hevik Binder agrees with this position and mentioned it in his article. Research in this area has gradually identified hidden risks to emotional health that can be caused by social media abuse, and their impact on a person's psychological state cannot be ignored. Similar arguments are also supported by many empirical results. After some analysis, this question deserves further discussion because of its practical significance.

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4. Research results

4.1. Social media use

Frequency and Duration of Use: 80% of young people use social media every day, of which 60% use 1 to 3 hours a day, and 20% use more than 3 hours a day.

Commonly Used Platforms: Douyin accounts for 70%, WeChat 65%, and QQ 60%. These platforms are most commonly used. At the same time, Weibo accounts for 40% and Xiaohongshu for 30%, which are also popular with users.

4.2. Mental health status

Anxiety and Depression: 40% of teens said they felt anxiety about social media, while 20% of teens reported mild symptoms of depression.

Cyberbullying: 15% of the teenagers reported experiencing cyberbullying.

Sleep Problems: 30% of teens said that watching social media affects their sleep.

5. Conclusions and future work

5.1. Conclusions

Studies have shown that social media has both positive and negative effects on adolescent mental health. As for young people, even if they are relatives and friends abroad, they can use social platforms to stay in touch with each other. When they feel isolated and helpless, they have the opportunity to find like-minded colleagues through such media that can often play an irreplaceable role of emotional support. The internet world provides a multitude of resources and opportunities worth exploring, including learning great role models, engaging in social interactions associated with one's own passions, etc., to assist in the creation and development of individual development directions [11]. But there are many significant shortcomings. Teens who often use social media can cause even more anxiety and depression. After seeing these seemingly ideal living conditions, they will feel that their life has become miserable, and then develop an inferiority complex and become miserable. Cyberbullying is also a more serious phenomenon. Many people's access to the Internet is free and their words hurt people, which leads to young people having psychological traumas. After staying up late and sitting online, the quality of his sleep deteriorated, which in turn caused him to wake up the next day irritated and extremely tired. As a result, it is crucial that young people use social media with health benefits. They need to pay attention to how much time they spend online and how they need to rest while participating in activities. Parents, teachers, and lawmakers should help young people master digital security knowledge to ensure their online safety from cyberbullying or other malicious information. Create a favorable and easily accessible information environment so that young people can enjoy the benefits of social media and minimize the negative effects.

5.2. Future work

Longitudinal Studies: Undertake comprehensive long-term studies to meticulously monitor how the impact of social media on mental health shifts and develops across various time spans [12].

Intervention Measures: Explore a wide range of approaches and techniques to offer targeted education and effective guidance to teenagers, assisting them in cultivating more positive and

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healthy behaviors when engaging with social media platforms [13].

Platform Differences: Let's take a closer look at the distinct ways in which different social media platforms can influence mental health. Each platform has its unique features and user interactions that may lead to varying psychological effects, such as feelings of connection or isolation [14].

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