

1
1st place
grades 9-10
I.H. I

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Social Media's Impact on the Mental Health Of Teenagers

It's no surprise that 95% of teenagers are using social media but the shocking fact is that over half say that it would be hard to give it up. Teenagers are constantly on their phones and this addictive habit is having a massive effect on their lives. Social media is negatively impacting teenagers' mental health in multiple ways. We need to be aware of this problem and come up with ways to address it as social media is taking over everyone's lives, especially the younger generation.

There have been countless tests done on the effects of social media on adolescents and most of the data points to social media being harmful. A study of U.S. adolescents aged 12-15 found that when adolescents spent over 3 hours on social media they "faced double the risk of experiencing poor mental health outcomes including symptoms of depression and anxiety." Along with causing depression and anxiety, social media creates unrealistic expectations with a constant display of people's faces, bodies, and lifestyles that are usually heavily filtered and only show a select portion of their actual lives. Adolescents, especially teenage girls, are already dealing with being self-conscious, having low self-esteem, and constantly comparing themselves

to others. According to the U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory, "When asked about the impact of social media on their body image, 46% of adolescents aged 13-17 said social media made them feel worse." Clearly, the potential effects of social media on mental health are dangerous and we must find a solution.

Many people may ask why teens who are concerned about their mental health being affected by social media don't just stop using social media, but it isn't that simple of a solution. If a teen decides to completely remove themselves from social media platforms it can be beneficial, but it can also severely isolate them from their peers. However, this doesn't mean that people should ignore the problem of being too engulfed in their phones. Social media is addicting and research has shown that "the average time spent on social media is 3.5 hours a day" for 8th and 10th graders. A good compromise to the dilemma between not being constantly on social media but not missing out on interacting with friends is to remove apps like Instagram and TikTok but keep the apps that you use solely to text with friends.

Social media is causing mental health issues, bad body image, and unrealistic expectations about life. To prevent this teenagers should be aware of how much time they are spending on their screens and be conscious of always putting forth positive messages on social media to prevent cyberbullying. The negative effect of social media on teenagers' mental health is a rising problem but if more kids, teenagers, and adults are aware of it, the faster we can stop it from becoming more of an issue.

2nd place

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Does Social Media Affect Mental Health

97% percent of teenagers use social media in this day and age, but is the use of social media negatively affecting them? Social media is the use of online communities throughout different platforms. Many different things can have an impact on mental health; mental health consists of emotional, physiological, and social well being. Social media has a very detrimental impact on teenagers' mental health.

Social media can make teenagers feel alone, left out, not good enough and anxious along with a lot of other things. 97% of people ages 13-17 report using social media almost constantly; with a collected 45% of them reporting a rise of depression and anxiety. With this data being considered, the connection between social media use and the rise of these mental health issues is undeniably connected. A huge portion of the young population is experiencing an increased amount of social media use and at the same time there is an increase in mental health issues.

Another important thing to consider is how important and irreplaceable real human connection is. You're unable to have a real human connection using social media. Human connection is needed to be able to maintain a strong and joyful head space. One source states, "It requires in-person contact with others to trigger the hormones that alleviate stress and make you feel happier, healthier, and more positive," this is ironic because social media was created to

bring people together but too much time using social media can make them feel lonely and isolated.

Many people may say that social media has a positive impact on people. They use examples such as creating online communities, bringing people closer together and sharing personal opinions with other people. But is there enough good to outweigh the bad or is the bad just too overpowering? The data clearly shows the negative impact that social media has on teenagers ages 13-17; therefore I do believe that the bad outweighs the good.

Social media has a detrimental effect on teenagers' mental health. The rise in anxiety and depression and the consistent use of social media are connected very clearly by the data. It is important to visit this topic because social media is impacting teenagers minds and if that is recognized then something can be done to improve the situation.

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12, November 2023

1st place
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The Impact of Social Media on Youth Culture

Almost everyone I know actively uses at least one social media platform. Recently, there has been a global boom of social media users and they keep getting younger and younger. Scientists have reasons to believe that social media use can have a negative effect on brains that are not fully developed. This can lead to self-image issues, depression, anxiety, and distractions from reality. Therefore, social media use negatively impacts the mental health of teens.

In the United States alone, around 302 million people access social media frequently as of 2023. According to the U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory, 40% of children ages 8-12 and up to 95% of children ages 13-17 use social media. Kids pay more attention to the lives of the people on their phones than they do to their real lives. Oftentimes, this is a gateway to self-image issues and unrealistic views of other people's lives. People on the internet like to show off all of their fancy jewelry and their big houses, which sets high expectations for kids and could potentially make them embarrassed of themselves.

On a global scale, around 4.9 billion people view social media frequently. Approximately 65% of adults around the world say their kids have been bullied over social media. This kind of bullying has a name, it is called cyber-bullying. The results of cyber-bullying are depression, anxiety, pressure, and sometimes it leads to suicide. According to the Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law, 13.6% of adolescents have made serious suicide attempts due to cyberbullying. Due to the risk of real-life harm, some states are considering age restrictions and certain controls on social media platforms.

Although people may think that social media can provide the youth with opportunities to creatively think, express themselves, and enhance connection, but it is not worth the risk. The negative effects of exposure to social media at a young age overpower the

ability to be creative. The internet can be beneficial, but it can also be dangerous to children with developing brains. The use of social media can lead to a loss of sleep which can disrupt neurological development. There are many other ways for kids to express themselves like painting, playing sports, wearing fun clothes, and other things that kids should be doing.

Social media can negatively affect teenagers who actively use it. Many bad consequences of social media include cyberbullying, societal pressure, and mental illness. There are other activities that kids can do that will benefit them in the long run and help their brains grow. In conclusion, instead of putting your kid in front of a screen, make them go outside and make real connections with each other.

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2nd place
grades 11-12
I. H. I
Nickerson 1

Daniel Nickerson

08 November 2023

Social Media's Effect on Our Minds

Social media has become an important part of our daily lives since the creation of Six Degrees - an early social network service - in 1997. It has made accessing information and communicating with people much easier. However, it has also led to an increase in mental health issues, new forms of bullying, and easy access to images and ideas that are dangerous to our youth.

As social media becomes more accessible we're beginning to see an increase in mental health issues within younger audiences. Today around eighteen percent of our population are between the ages of 0 and 14. As children's brains develop they are very susceptible to outside influences from sources such as social media. From 2016-2019 the CDC conducted a study on the mental health of children aged 3-17. In their study, they found that 4.4% of the children had been diagnosed with depression and 9.4% had been diagnosed with anxiety. And with more recent studies showing that nearly ninety percent of teens use social media, we can only expect these numbers to increase. With age restrictions, we can hope to decrease these numbers in younger audiences.

The growth of social media brought about new forms of bullying such as cyberbullying and trolling. According to a study conducted by the Annapolis Police Department about 58% of kids admitted that someone had said mean or hurtful things about them online. Also, according to ResearchGate and ScienceDaily children who are cyberbullied are 1.9 times more likely to

commit suicide. With accounts of cyberbullying increasing each year, this number can skyrocket. But it is not only children that experience cyberbullying, adults also experience it through the effects of trolling. Since trolling has been around much longer than cyberbullying many have begun to overlook it, but trolling is still a prevalent issue today greatly affecting its victims' mental health.

Even though social media can benefit us, many harmful things are still found within it. Social media is a handy tool for looking up helpful information or entertainment. However, many noncredible websites provide false information on a topic or try to fulfill an agenda by omitting key points. There are also many harmful ideas and imageries found within social media such as sex, drugs, and violence. Many of these things are incredibly addictive and frequently corrupt people's minds. Allowing children to view these at young ages damages their brains and causes issues in their development.

Social media is a useful but dangerous tool that causes increases in mental health issues, introduces cyberbullying, and exposes children to dangerous ideas and imagery. But with safety measures, we can help prevent these problems from growing any further. If we let these problems continue to grow, they will lead to much greater issues affecting society as a whole.

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