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Impact of Social Media Use on Mental Health

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Abstract

Purpose/Aim:

The purpose of this project was to investigate whether social media use by adolescents and young adults has an impact on their mental health, including depression and anxiety. The question we asked was “In adolescents and young adults, what is the impact of social media on mental health outcomes (depression and anxiety)?”

Background:

Around the world, more than 300 million people suffer from depression, with many of those also suffering from anxiety. In addition, WHO suggests that depression and anxiety have a major economic impact, costing the global economy US\$ 1 trillion each year in lost productivity. Recent statistics indicate the close to half of teens age 15-17 say they are on the internet “almost constantly”. More than nine-in-ten are social media users. Many have raised concerns on social media today and its effect on mental health and general functioning of adolescents and young adults. Research has been done to determine if there is a correlation between social media use and depression and anxiety in this same group.

Conclusion:

Evidences clearly states that there is a correlation between the increased use of social media by adolescents and young adults and increased symptoms of depression and anxiety. Efforts should be made to educate health care providers about the link in their adolescent clientele. Nurses can be instrumental in improving mental health outcomes through screening and education.



Impact of Social Media Use on Mental Health

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Rationale

- According to the World Health Organization (WHO), more than 300 million people suffer from depression and anxiety.
- The global annual cost = \$1 trillion USD.
- Social media use is widespread among adolescents and young adults.
- Researchers question if there is a correlation between social media use and depression and anxiety in this same group.

Purpose

The purpose of this evidence review was to investigate whether social media use by adolescents and young adults has an impact on their mental health, including depression and anxiety.



Methods

- The PICOT format was used to develop the question "In adolescents and young adults, what is the impact of social media on mental health outcomes (depression and anxiety)?"
- The databases, EBSCOHOST, CINAHL, and Medline were searched (2010 to 2019) using the following keywords: Social media use, adolescents, young adults, anxiety, depression, and mental health.

Results

Level of Evidence	# of Articles
II	1
IV	12
VI	4

- 99 articles returned, 16 articles relevant to the topic. One article was found through an ancestry search resulting in a total of 17 relevant to the topic.
- Majority of evidence shows significantly increased odds of depression and anxiety with higher social media use in this population.
- Increased likelihood of having an anxiety disorder with higher daily social media use.
- Factors that have a direct relationship to mental health are: increased time and frequency of social media use, and increased number of platforms used.
- Some research found that social media can have positive effects, such as bringing a feeling of connection between users and helping adolescents who are extremely shy feel less vulnerable.
- Using four national surveys of 11 million young people each decade since the 1960's, it was discovered that *sudden changes occurred* in the behavior and mental health of teens born from 1995 and later. These teens were the first generation raised with smartphones.

Clinical Relevance

- Do health care providers understand the connection between mental health and social media use in their teen and young adult patients?
- Ask: Before medications and therapy are introduced what can be done to identify and reduce the influence of social media use on a patient's mental well-being?
- Recommendation: Use the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale to assess a patient's use of and to identify patterns. When a patient scores a 4 or more, follow up with questions and education.
- Introduce benefits of improved mental health and well-being by reducing social media use.

Conclusion

- Evidence strongly suggests a direct relationship between social media use by adolescents, young adults and increased symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- Efforts should be made to educate primary care providers about this connection so appropriate interventions may be implemented.
- Nurses can be instrumental in improving mental health outcomes for youth by screening and providing education about curtailing social media use practices, providing methodologies to improve mental health and general well-being.



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