EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON SELF-ESTEEM AMONG ADOLESCENTS

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research explores the far-reaching relationship between social media involvement and adolescent self-esteem. The study looks at the differing encounters that young people have with a range of social media, examining concepts such as social comparison and validation-seeking behavior; strategic highlighting of oneself, and platform-specific impact. Interviews and focus group discussions suggest that the pressure to conform creeps in daily, leaving most people feeling they live up to expectations not out of merit but only because they are unfamiliar with alternative paths. Their impact was dual-edged: they provided prompt hits to self-esteem, but fueled dependencies on outside validation. In addition, the study revealed differences between virtual selves and real-life encounters. The experience of each platform was seen as different by category: Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok. Although the study points out problems with social media, it also shows that strong offline networks and media literacy can serve as protective roles. The findings highlight the great urgency of intervention that is appropriately targeted to encourage critical media literacy, authentic self-expression and strong offline networks in order to reduce the harm created by social media, promote teen well-being in this digital era.

Keywords: social media; self-esteem; adolescent; students selfesteem.

INTRODUCTION

In today's digitally inter-connected world, the pervasive power of social media is now part and parcel of adolescent life. By providing channels for social interaction, self-expression, and information exchange, social media has redefined the possibilities open to adolescents in establishing their identity while interacting more deeply with other people. But despite its tantalizing promise of connectedness there have been many in the scholarly world to point out just as real negative effects on psychological well-being, and particularly self-esteem. Adolescence is a key developmental stage involving identity exploration, self-perception formation, and the related sensitivity to social influences. In this transformative period, more and more adolescents seek to use social media platforms as means of self-portrayal and interpersonal comparison. However, the effects on their developing sense of self-worth and self-respect are a topic of much debate and intensive research. The primary goal of this qualitative study is to discover the fine-grained experiences and impressions that different attitudes about social media use and its impact on self-esteem generate in adolescents.

In adopting a qualitative approach, this study seeks to capture the subtleties, sentiments and subjective stories that quantification does not always precisely record. Employing in-depth interviews and focus group discussion, this piece of research attempts to uncover the complex interrelationship between patterns of social media use, self-awareness and building of self-esteem among teenagers. The subtle relationship between social media involvement and self-esteem among adolescents should not only interest academia, but also effect the way that interventions and support mechanisms tackling problematic forms of digital behavior are designed. In this regard, this article reports on the exploratory

conclusions drawn from qualitative research into social media's effect upon the self-esteem of young people. It offers a more complex analysis unconcerned merely with numerical data and bridges what is left out by quantitative metrics to understand how young people experience themselves in it.

Literature review
In his study Schwartz (2012) sought to examine the impact of Facebook usage on the development of self-esteem and well-being in 13, 14, and 15 year old kids. The study adopted a quantitative research method. Thirty participants were surveyed by way of an online questionnaire with 26 questions. Participants were found through online bulletin articles, a Facebook event page and youth organizations at local communities. Thus, the results emphasized how important social contact is for young people--and for Facebook. Being able to keep in touch was one aspect of Facebook that people valued. Also positive associations were made with photo tagging, friend requests, status updates and private messages. Moreover, they pointed out that their Facebook friend networks consisted mostly of people known to them in real life. Also, respondents said they had good feelings about both their offline groups of friends and those on Facebook.

Such results suggest that Facebook is nothing more than an information center for teens, a place to maintain contacts. Teens get their positive emotions and reassurance from these connections. The association between Facebook usage and positive feelings among teenagers suggests that it is helping them develop self-esteem and overall well-being. This work has some implications for clinical social work practice, which demands that practitioners be able to understand and apply the role of social media in adolescents 'lives. In addition, it points the way for future research efforts to investigate this complicated link between online social networking and adolescents 'psychological health.

The rapid advancement of the Internet, especially among teenagers, has altered dramatically how they spend their lives. Through the years, adolescents have grown more enamored of technology and internet usage rates have risen sharply. Among young people, the rate of those using the Internet increased to 93 % by 2007 from only a mere 73 % in 2000. Of them, already some 75 % had broadband access. Of special note is that 80 % of fourteen to seventeen-year-olds now have cell phones with internet capabilities. This torrent of technology changed the way adolescents interacted socially. With the prevalence of computer-mediated communication, they maintained their friendship and peer networks largely through online channels. This contrasts with fears that internet use hampers communication skills or relationships, for teenagers in fact saw it as a means to help cement existing bonds and improve suburban relations offline (Schwartz 2012).

In his study, the researcher Perkovich (2021) examines how different levels of social media activity correlate with self-esteem among adolescent females aged 13-19. The analysis included 11 articles obtained from databases such as Academic Search Premier, APA PsychInfo, CINAHL, MEDLINE and Pubmed. These studies concerned the relationship between daily social media usage (more than 2 hours versus less than 2 hours) and self-esteem among teenage girls. On the whole, most evidence suggests a negative link between increased use of social media and self-esteem among female teenagers. The results show that those who spend more than two hours per day on social media types of platforms tend to have lower self-esteem in this age group. This points to an unsettling connection between increased viewing time on these platforms and possible negative effects on the self-esteem of teenage girls.

The movement from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 represents a fundamental paradigm shift. Web 2.0, which has user-generated content and interaction as its defining characteristics, brought forth sites for social networking such as Facebook and My Space along with blogs and wikis. Fundamentally changing how teens kept in touch and exchanged content, these platforms, especially social networking sites, opened up spaces for users to build their networks. As Facebook morphed from a private college-only network to a public one open to anyone thirteen and older, the number of adolescents going online grew. But people began to question its effect on the health of teenagers.

Developmental theorists, pointing out the impact which peer relationships have on an adolescent's own self-concept and a general sense of well-being, asked what effect an internet-based encounter might have upon such a formative period. The rapid growth in the use of the internet by teenagers thus required a new type of parent to come into being, making it necessary for parents to learn about internet safety and all its headaches. The internet is seen as having

a positive influence on kids' lives by a relatively large number of parents, despite concerns. Moreover, people working with adolescents, especially in fields such as social work and education, recognized the need to get used to Web 2.0. Social workers, in fact, particularly appreciated the importance of guiding and warning adolescents about the safe and healthy use of the net. We realize that this may affect developmental milestones as well as psychological health.

Ma, (2022) investigated the effects of online activities such as participation on social media, entertainment and information searches, self-esteem among teens. The study involved 193 students; the average age was 13.3 years with most being male (57.5%). However, data analysis revealed no significant relationships between engaging in several online activities and self-esteem (p > 0.05). Nevertheless, the route analysis moderated gender on the relationship between social interaction activities and self- esteem. In contrast to their male counterparts, female participants demonstrated a greater extent of engagement in social activities and exhibited higher self-esteem connectedness. This study sheds light on the fact that teenagers' social media use impacts them in a way, which is hard to understand. Even though specific online activities did not always translate into positive self-esteem, gendered differences were found in the relationship between social engagement on digital platforms and self-esteem. It draws attention to gender and highlights the need to consider a wide range of online behaviors when studying the influence of social media on teenagers. The researcher delves into the complicated relationships between using SNS and their influence on individuals' quality of life and self-understanding. it highlights the spread of smartphones and internet around the world especially social networking sites (SNSs) such as Facebook, YouTube and Instagram within Asian countries. Social networking sites usage has been explored in terms of the relationship it has towards self-esteem. Social networking sites (SNS) usage is strongly associated with self-esteem which has been viewed as an important measure of happiness and life satisfaction.

Most of the studies that are currently accessible overlook diverse outcomes of various online activities such as data searching, entertainment or positive social contacts in favor of focusing almost exclusively on certain SNS platforms, like Facebook or general social media usage. Obtaining these numerous activities may be a full picture of the impact of SNS use. In addition, although sociodemographic variables have been considered in previous studies, the moderating role of features like gender has not been given as much consideration. Looking into the effects of gender may lead us to clarify how the use of social networking affects wellbeing and self-worth. All in all, this area of research provides an intricate web of social networking sites use, self-esteem and overall well-being relationships that need deeper investigations into different online behaviors as well as the moderating variables such as gender to identify how these relationships work.

The goal of the researcher (Raymer, 2015), research was to find out how college students' use of Facebook and other social networking sites correlated with their sense of self-worth. This study concentrated on examining the effect of Facebook engagement on students' self-esteem levels because prior research has linked increasing online activity to decreased face-to-face interactions and feelings of loneliness and melancholy. Undergraduate students engaged in an anonymous online survey, answering questions about their eating habits, body image, degree of Facebook usage, and self-esteem on a variety of scales. Independent samples T-tests and bivariate correlation tests were used to analyze the gathered data. The results showed that there are differences between the sexes when it comes to Facebook usage, with women using the site more frequently and having bigger friend networks than men.

In his research, Gallagher (2017) aimed to investigate the possible connection between teenage use of social media and self-esteem. Surveys were completed by 130 students from two high schools to gauge their self-esteem and social media usage. Using the data gathered, correlational tests were performed, and the results showed a substantial relationship between a few social media factors and the participants' self-esteem scores. At first, two variables stood out among the 130 participants. Four characteristics were shown to be strongly correlated with self-esteem after a subset of the data those who did not utilize social media was removed from the analysis. These important variables included things like how participants felt when their posts got fewer likes than they had anticipated, how many likes they had received on their most recent selfie, how many

likes they usually received on selfies, and how long they waited to check social media after posting.

In Hasan, S. (2018), the researchers examined the effects of gender (male vs. female), social media usage (high vs. low), and education level (graduate vs. postgraduate) on the self-esteem of 160 youths from DDU Gorakhpur University. They also aimed to investigate the connection between self-esteem and social media use. The participants were split into two groups: 80 postgraduate students (40 boys and 40 girls) studying in various university departments, and 80 graduates (40 boys and 40 girls). The Cooper Smith Self-Esteem Inventory was used to gauge self-esteem, while an open-ended structured interview technique was used to gauge social media usage. The results showed that there were notable gender differences in terms of self-esteem, with women showing greater levels of self-esteem than men.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore and understand the varied encounters that young people have had with social media. The goal of the study is to explore some of the complex linkages between social media interaction and adolescents 'self-esteem. Finding and explaining the main themes present in teens' lives on social media is another goal. An example is the exploration of themes like social comparison, validation-seeking behavior, selective self-presentation and differing experiences with various social media platforms. By examining the differences in experience by platform (Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok and so on), the study hopes to tease out platform-specific effects. It is an attempt to find out how such platforms affect the self-esteem and behavior of teenagers.

Methodology
Research Design

In order to investigate and comprehend the subjective experiences and viewpoints of teenagers on their usage of social media and its perceived impact on self-esteem, this qualitative study uses a phenomenological approach. As a paradigm for research, phenomenology emphasizes the assessment of participants' realities in relation to the phenomena being studied, enabling a thorough analysis of lived experiences.

Participant

The study used purposive sampling as a method of securing participants. Students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds between the age of 13 and 18 years were selected to ensure a wide variety in terms of the use of social media. In order to ensure that participants have an exposure to different social media platforms, participants were recruited from community centers, schools and online platforms.

Data Collection

The main techniques for data collection were focus groups and semi-structured interviews. As the semi-structured style allowed, flexible investigation of the participants' thoughts, attitudes and emotions towards their social media use and its impact on self-esteem. In focus group discussions, the participants avail a venue that they could express themselves through free talk and opinion sharing among peers.

Ethical Considerations

At every stage of the study, there was strict compliance with ethical codes. Consent was freely given, both by the participants and their legal guardians. The participants were guaranteed confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data gathered through focus groups and interviews. To study the dataset, a systematic approach was taken in coding to identify themes, common patterns and unique narrative arcs. To enhance the validity and reliability, stringent reflexivity and triangulation were used. Throughout the study, any biases researchers' positions were admitted. The reflexivity was preserved by frequent reflection upon the researchers' epistemic beliefs and how these might influence their interpretation of the data. In order to minimize the impact of the researcher, various precautions were taken during the process of data gathering and analysis.

Results:

The results of this qualitative study reveal such a rich landscape where adolescents come to terms with their social media presence, and significantly impacting their self-esteem. Thus, one of the main topics that can be seen in the conversations by the participants is on social comparison prevalence.

Adolescents manifested the unified tendency to compare themselves with their peers and role models often feeling that they are less than other people who compared, along with damaged self-esteem. However, the conformity to ideal standards of beauty, success and lifestyle that were predominant in these online venues only served to amplify these issues even more; it raised the pressure individuals face because they compare themselves socially.

Furthermore, the research focused on the complicated dynamics between validation-seeking behaviors and social media adolescents' self-esteem.

Firstly, the positive reinforcement with likes and comments served to boost people's self-esteem but at the same time demonstrated a dependence on external approval. In this regard, one of the main issues that stemmed from this reliance on social media interactions as means of validation was a low engagement or negative feedback which translated into alteration of self-esteem and thus exposed loopholes in the validation loop among these adolescents.

Table exploring results of social media on adolescent self-esteem

Themes in Adolescent Experiences with Social Media	Description
Social Comparison and Self-Esteem	Participants often engaged in comparing themselves with peers and influencers on social media, leading to feelings of inadequacy and lowered self-esteem. Pressure to conform to idealized standards was prevalent.
Validation and Feedback Loop	Receiving positive feedback on posts contributed to a temporary boost in self-esteem. Dependency on likes and comments, however, led to fluctuations in self-worth based on social media interactions.
Selective Self-Presentation	Adolescents curated a specific image online, different from their real-life experiences. Maintaining this online persona impacted their self-esteem as they aimed to present a favorable image.
Cyberbullying and Negative Impact	Instances of cyberbullying and negative comments significantly affected participants' self-esteem, leading to feelings of insecurity and reduced confidence.
Variations in Experiences Across Platforms	
Instagram	Emphasis on visual content led to comparisons based on edited photos and curated feeds, impacting body image and self-esteem.
Snapchat and Streaks Culture	Pressure to maintain streaks on Snapchat impacted self-esteem due to fears of losing social validation associated with streaks.
TikTok and Performance Anxiety	Pressure to create engaging content for likes and followers led to disappointment and reduced self-esteem if metrics were not achieved.
Coping Mechanisms and Positive Influences	
Supportive Networks	Strong offline connections positively impacted self-esteem, offering support and perspective in navigating online challenges.
Media Literacy and Self-Reflection	Increased media literacy helped some adolescents navigate social media consciously, leading to healthier behaviors and improved self-esteem.

This table captures the complex aspects of adolescents' interactions with social media and their impact on self-esteem. It outlines the most important themes that surfaced during participant conversations; namely, social comparison and feelings of inadequacy, need for validation seeking behaviors, and self-censor online. Additionally, it draws attention to the platform differences like Instagram impact on body image, Snapchat streak culture influencing selfesteem and TikTok pressures of performance. Also, it defines positive factors such as supportive offline networks and enhanced media

literacy provide information about coping mechanisms that attenuate the negative effects on self-esteem. In general, the table presents a broad picture of social media's versatility in adolescents' lives and its effects on their self-perception.

Another important facet of adolescents' experience on social media platforms is selective self-display. Most participants admitted to tailoring and even adorning their lives on the internet. This practice aimed at presenting a favorable image only made things worse by creating a disjunction between the online persona and offline realities, exacerbating how hard it is to maintain an ideal self in virtual environments. The study also focused on the contrasting influence of social media sites. Adolescents often reported issues with the aesthetics of visual content on Instagram, as they discussed how published images influenced body image and self-assessment based on comparisons established through edited photos and manipulated feeds. In addition, platform specific tensions such as the case of Snapchat's streaks as well as TikTok's content oriented approach reveal other pressure points for adolescents across different platforms. In the midst of these challenges, there were also some coping mechanisms and positive influences. Adolescents focused on the critical role of supportive offline networks to reduce the negative effects that social media can have on self-esteem. The positive effects of online experiences were mitigated by the strong connections with friends and family, which offered a perspective and support. The participants who had higher media literacy showed a conscious awareness of social media's constructed nature with self-reflection as an instrument that guides individuals through social networks more effectively, healthier online activities and ultimately enhancing their self esteem. In particular, the findings of the study emphasize the nuances of social media experiences among adolescents, showing the sophisticated interplay between various platform-specific factors and their effect on self-esteem. These findings not only highlight the problems that adolescents face but also shed light on some of ways for the promotion of healthier relationships with digital platforms, suggesting interventions specifically targeting critical media literacy and reinforcing offline social support as means to create more protective environments for adolescent wellbeing in a digitalized world.

Discussion

The results of this qualitative research provide insights into the interwoven nature of SNS utilization and self-respect amongst teenagers, revealing a convoluted picture full of obstacles and chances. This social comparison was pervasive, shaping an adolescent girl's sense of value. Due to the permanent stimuli of imitation from these 'perfect' features that several social media sites promoted, it led to creating a feeling of lack that demanded measures toward fighting such false ideas. The result of validation-seeking behavior's backsliding effect was a higher level of self esteem via positive interaction and developed ineffective dependence on external approval. First, the revolving door of sorts between validation through likes, comments and social interactions reflects a weak link between intrinsic self-worth and online feedback. Nevertheless, the navigation and comprehension of this feedback loop create complex challenges to ensure that adolescents learn healthier online participation. In fact, exposing the incongruity between virtual identities that adolescents construct through selective self-presentation on social media and their actual life reveals its impact upon difficulties with self-esteem. It also created ambiguity and exacerbated issues of self-worth because of the energy devoted to curated online identities rather than genuine identity. The location exaggerated concerns about the body image while streak culture on Snapchat indulged in anxieties regarding social worth. The focus of TikTok on content creation causes pressure in terms of performance that affects self-esteem, therefore calling for some specific interventions depending on the platform to reduce such stressors. But in spite of these challenges, the study detected opportunities for better adolescent health online. The supportive networks and good connections developed off-line emerged as a positive impact containing resilience against social media's negative influence on self-esteem. The promotion of media literacy and self-reflection encouraged teens to practice healthy social media practices, adopt more productive online behaviors, and improve their self-esteem.

The findings support the requirement for integrated strategies that cover all of the many issues introduced by social media. To help diminish the negative impact that social media has on self-esteem among adolescents by supporting critical media literacy, true expression and real connections between

stakeholders offline. It is necessary to conduct further research initiatives and collaborative endeavors in accordance with various education, family, and social settings aimed at systematic interventions that foster positive digital interactions promoting adolescents' well-being amidst the contemporary age of technology.

Conclusion

The study uncovered fragile patterns in that regard, recognizing trials and tribulations, as well as plausible opportunities for intervention. The study revealed that many social comparison phenomena significantly affect the self-esteem of adolescents as social networking sites were cited to expose one on pressure to fit certain defined ideals. Validation-seeking behaviors initially boosted self-efficacy, but over time it revealed flaws in the fact of external validation dependency and unstable value due to online interactions. Besides that, the concept of selective self-presentation highlighted even bigger gap between representation in virtual space and real life, providing ground for more problems with teenagers' self-respect. Noting the diversity, it can be concluded that Instagram's influence on body image, Snapchat streak culture decreasing self-esteem while TikTok performance pressures they stress out the company. Faced with these challenges, robust physical networks and increasing media literacy emerged as important resilience factors, mitigating the potential damage of social media to self-esteem. Therefore, this study highlights the importance of individualized approaches aimed at addressing obscurities in adolescents' life on social networks. To achieve such healthy engagements, critical media literacy, authentic selfexpression and strong offline support networks need to be encouraged. Together with knowledge sharing between research findings and practical implementation, stakeholders can ensure beneficial digital experiences while enhancing the wellbeing of the youth in times that is emerging technologies. This research can offer researchers, educators, policy-makers and caregivers with a thorough appreciation of the complicated interplay between social media and adolescents? self esteem that will help them overcome various difficulties in this field.

Limitations

The proposed study offers invaluable findings regarding the complex relationship between social media and adolescent self-esteem with some limitations worth mentioning. Nevertheless, the sample while diverse may fail to capture all aspects of social media use among adolescents thereby unable to generalize finding. Moreover, the subjective nature of a qualitative study can hinder the data analysis due to its results. In addition, the research's emphasis on particular social networking sites may miss new or developing platforms that could significantly impact adolescent confidence. Furthermore, the fact that retrospective design relies on self-reporting might cause participants to recall their experiences inaccurately. Ultimately, despite efforts to ensure equal representation of my demographic variables, biases or unaddressed factors may influence the results of this study. On the other hand, these limitations lead to a variety of exciting possibilities for future studies undertaking different approaches and accounting for current trends in order to expand the knowledge through better understanding how social media impacts adolescent self-esteem.

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