

Social Media and Adolescent Mental Health: Depression, Bullying and Suicidal Risk in Teens

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Background

Social media use has become increasingly popular among teens and adolescents during the past decade. Technologic advancements have led to an increase in Internet use and virtual communication through computers, cellphones, and tablets. The prevalence of social media use is leading to an increased understanding of the risks associated with it. Approximately 92% of teens state that they use the Internet daily, and 71% use at least two different types of social media sites. Several studies indicate that signs and symptoms of depression may be related to prolonged use of social networking sites, such as Facebook, and that low self-esteem may be associated with certain social networking activities. Furthermore, studies indicate overall social media use, emotional investment in social media, and night time-specific social media use were associated with higher levels of anxiety and depression, risk for self-harming behaviors, suicide risk, lower self-esteem, and poorer sleep quality in adolescents ages. Purpose / Goal: The use of social media can have negative mental health consequences on the adolescent population and in severe cases lead to depression, suicide ideation, attempts and completion. It is important across disciplines as healthcare providers, school social workers and counselors, parents, teachers, and the adolescent population itself to be aware of these effects and to take precautions in order to prevent these negative outcomes. Having knowledge of the risk factors, detrimental effects of use and investing in ways to appropriately intervene is paramount to healthy outcomes for our adolescent population.

Conclusion

The findings from this literature review have practical value for healthcare providers, parents, and teachers. An important role for all includes becoming familiar with the different types of social media outlets and the usage of these sites, as well as length of time spent using social media by the adolescent population they care for. Knowing these sites are outlets for adolescents to send and receive different information about themselves to friends as well as strangers. Parents and teachers should be aware that profiles on these sites are open for the public to see unless there is a privacy setting that is manually set up. Another important role is to include routine screenings to assess the risk of depression associated with social media use. Tools could be developed to help providers engage in conversations that inquire about online contacts, incidence of being cyberbullied, and assessing the time spent on social media. When precautions and screening are in place there is a better chance of combating the negative effects of social media. Further research is needed to identify adolescents that are at a higher risk for negative consequences of social media and provide strategies that will allow them to avoid or manage the risks. Further research could also focus on the amount adolescents are invested in their social networking and less focus on how they are using their social

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networking sites. In addition, further guidance is needed for healthcare providers and parents on the appropriate social media use with adolescents.

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