

Andrew Ertl

Professor Bradley

Enc2135

18 October 2017

Does Facebook jeopardize the social development of teenagers?

The advancement and use of the internet, along with social media websites, have greatly increased the ease of living for teenagers across the nation. The many advancements within the internet as well as social media and Facebook have further pushed society into a more advanced and knowledgeable time. Furthermore, the research obtained from scientists all over the world has been and is overwhelmingly presented in a positive way for the internet and social media. Still, the question on whether or not social media effects the well-being and the social skills must be answered. The two main aspects that present negative effects include the phenomenon of “Facebook depression” and how a teenage user can become dependent on social media and the distractions caused by the need, that teenage youths have, to check their social media websites and constantly and keep their own social media profiles up to date.

The first major negative impact caused by the use of social media and the internet by teenagers is the phenomena referred to as, “Facebook depression.” Psychologists have defined “Facebook depression” as the affective result of spending too much time on social media such as Facebook (Selfhout, 819-833). According to (World Health Organization, 2010) depression is one of the leading causes of disability in the world today. The relationship between the leading cause of disability in the world and the leading social media websites crucially needed to be researched. According to Rick Lester PHD, when given an interview, “Statistically we are finding more kids with depression as well as anxiety. Another thing we have been noticing is that it is creating a more egocentric culture.” As Lester states from a first-hand account, on October

29th 2017, that depression has increased due to Facebook usage. The authors, in a study from 1996 named 'Homenet study', investigated the relationship between the use of home internet and depression. Through the research done by 'Homenet', has concluded, over a twenty-four-month period, that there was and is a statistically significant association between the internet and teens with depression. The researchers then made the inference that the internet can cause declines in social involvement as well as psychological well-being (Kraut et al., 1998, pg. 1029). This research directly relates to the research question because in this research experiment it shows how the use of the internet can cause declines in the teenage society in the ways of depression, lack of social involvement and self-well-being. The evidence found in the 'Homenet' research supports the claim that teenagers have been neglected and negatively impacted socially and emotionally through the use of social media and the internet. The evidence from this article supports the claim because the patients over a twenty-four-month period, showed an increasing sign of depression as well as social anxiety. After six months in the case study the subjects started to seek out face to face interactions with their peers less. After eight to nine months the subjects in this experiment started becoming less fluent in reading social cues as well as not knowing and picking up social etiquettes required in sensitive conversations. This seems obvious to someone outside the case study because the subjects are replacing their friends and colleagues with online social chats and animated avatars that represent the person on the chat. When Lester was asked *Is the relationships between teenagers effected by social media in anyway?* He responded, "One thing that has been shown in the research we have been doing is that the first thing to be effected is the friendships between teenagers. Due to there being social media websites where people can become friends through a single click of a mouse, teenagers have on average made less effort to make friends with the people around them. When the social media

users can no longer see the face and body of the person they are chatting online with they instead see characters, pictures, or they might even see an animated character that represents them. Due to not being able to see the persons face and body expressions in real time can lead to misunderstanding or the context in which a post was written, or it could even lead to the person feeling like that there will be no consequences in what they say online because no one really knows who the person posting on online chats or on social media is. In an interview Lester was asked *What safety risks have you seen from social media?* Dr. Lester responded with “Cyberbullying is a huge safety risk with social media and should be watched over by the parents as well as teachers.” This supports the previous claim that when one feels like they can get away with anything they will say anything when given the chance. All this evidence applies to the research question, “Does social media negatively impact the social development of teenage youth?” because it clearly shows that one of the negative effects that consistent use of social media and internet websites can lead to a dependence for social acceptance and sense of self-worth which in turn leads to “Facebook depression,” which is, the depression caused by having a dependence on social media or internet websites such as Facebook.

The second finding that relates and answers the research question, “does Facebook have a negative effect on the teenage youths of today’s society,” is that social media and internet websites pose as a distraction to the teenagers in today’s society. In the excerpt from the Journal of adolescent research (Michikyan, pg.411-414) it thoroughly introduces the problems teenagers face due to social media. One of the problems faced by teenagers is that social media and the internet pose too many distractions. The first paragraph in the excerpt, from the Journal of adolescent research, presents a scenario similar to imagining a teenager doing homework on their laptop in the study of their homes while on their phone texting friends, while also being on their

tablet updating their social media platforms, while all at the same time the television is playing in the background. The article also proposes a very valid question saying something like “how will the ubiquitous use of these media affect their sense of self and others? (lines 2-3)” This source relates to the research topic because it directly answers the research question saying that Facebook causes teenagers to become distracted. This source includes several other sources that contain experiments and research studies done on this subject. Later in this article the research goes on to show a case study done by his colleagues and himself that shows the distraction level of teens being directly related to the internet and social media. As described by the researcher in the first paragraphs with the scenario of the teenager doing homework he illustrates the findings he saw from the case study done. The case study done involved several teenagers trying to accomplish an extended task or assignment such as writing a paper or reading a book. The researchers wanted to see how often the teenagers were distracted by their social media and use of the internet from accomplishing their tasks and assignments. The trial was done in two stages with the first stage having the teenage youths in a quiet study room with their task in front of them as well as a television in the corner of the room that was turned off but with the remote on the studies table as well as having their phone and laptop in front of the subjects on the table. The researches then watched from another room from the surveillance camera set up in the subject’s study and recorded every time social media or other internet websites distracted the person. Then at another later time the person was given a similar task but this time with nothing else in the room. The results from the experiment showed that when the subject is in a room with no distractions the task is completed more effectively and resulted in a better understanding of the subject matter or the novel they read. The experiment studied and conducted by Michikyan in the Journal of adolescent research directly supports the claim that social media and internet websites

negatively impact the teenage youths. It supports the claim because it shows in the case study that teenagers when presented with the opportunity of looking at their social media pages, watching television, and searching on the internet the subject will take the opportunity and therefore become distracted from the tasks that need to be accomplished. The distractions caused by social media and online websites are a negative impact on the teenage youth because it stops the teenager from accomplishing the object. When one ponders how often oneself becomes distracted from an assignment by phones and other social media outlets it becomes obvious that distractions are very possible for teenagers in today's society. One must also wonder how the increase of teenagers abusing Adderall and the increase in diagnoses of ADHD relates to the increase in possible distractions. The Journal of adolescent research by Michikyan applies to the research question "Does the use of social media negatively impact teenager's socially and emotionally?" because in this article the research clearly points to social media outlets and internet websites directly effecting the focus of teenagers.

From another perspective, to the claim, the research conducted by Nicole B. Ellison in the journal of computer-mediated communication, teenagers benefit from social media outlets as well as internet chat websites. The benefit the teenagers see, according to the journal of computer-mediated communication, is the ability one has with social media to stay connected with members of a previously inhabited area (Ellison, pg.1). The article then goes into explaining how one being able to stay connected and in touch with past friends and colleagues builds one's social capital. The research shows that in the case study conducted by Ellison that teenagers who separate from a community due to a family move or a separation of friend groups can benefit socially with the social media websites allowing the subject to maintain the friendship between the rest of the subject disregarding the distance between the colleagues. This article relates to the

research question “Does the use of social media negatively impact teenager’s socially and emotionally?” because it answers the question and shows that instead of negatively impacting the teenagers socially, social media outlets and internet websites give an advantage to the youth by allowing the teenagers to maintain the relationships they make disregarding where they meet form the relationship.

In stark contrast to the claim made by Ellison stating that social media outlets and the internet websites benefit the teenage youth in today’s society is disproven by Ruth N. Bolton in the Journal of Service Management. In the Journal of Service Management researcher Bolton describes the theory that connecting and constantly maintaining relationships with colleagues and friend groups that are no longer in the same community is rather dangerous to teenagers. In the case study conducted by Bolton the subjects are teenagers who recently moved out of state or into a separate town in which they used to live. The subjects that stayed in contact with previous companions through social media showed less desire to meet a new friend group which Bolton inferred could lead to a dependence on social media and then eventually depression and weakening social skills (Bolton, pg.13). When one logically thinks about the effects social media can have on teenagers who have recently moved to a new community it is clear that even though in small doses it is beneficial to stay in contact with previous friend groups, the benefits to starting a new friend group and finding new colleagues far out ways the prior.

In conclusion, the claim that social media negatively impacts teenagers socially and emotionally, when regarding the experiments and research conducted, can be considered factual. Not disregarding the many benefits and advancements that come from the internet and social media, the disadvantages that they play on teenagers is obvious. Eventhough the internet and Facebook provide people with amazing advancements there is still a part of society that is

overlooked. The vital part of society that researches over look, is that, the use of Facebook and social media will weaken and or prohibit the youth from forming social connections and learning how to effectively deal with real life scenarios face to face.

Works Cited

- Michikyan, Minas. "Adolescent Media and Social Media use." *Journal of adolescent research*. Sage Journal, April 27 2016, Pg. 411-414
- Schurgin O'Keeffe, Gwenn. "The Impact of Social Media on Children, Adolescents, and Families." *American Academy of Pediatrics*. American Academy of Pediatrics, April 01, 2011, Pediatrics, April 2011, Volume 127 / Issue 4.
- Lenhart, Amanda. "Social Media & Mobile Internet Use among Teens and Young Adults. Millennials" *Pew Internet & American Life Project*. Numerical/Quantitative Data; Reports – Research, 2010-Feb-3, Washington, DC 20036
- Dr Valkenburg, Patti M. Jochen Peter, and Alexander P. Schouten. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*. October 2006, 9(5): 584-590.
- Barker Alerie. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*. April 2009, 12(2): 209-213.
- Slater, Micheal. "Reinforcing Spirals: The Mutual Influence of Media Selectivity and Media Effects and Their Impact on Individual Behavior and Social Identity." *Communication theory*. Volume 17, Issue 3 August 2007 Pages 281–303
- Ahn, June. "The effect of social network sites on adolescents' social and academic development: Current theories and controversies." *Advances in Information Science*. Study for information sciences, Volume 62, Issue 8, August 2011, Pages 1435–1445
- Madden, Mary, et al. "Teens, social media, and privacy." *Pew Research Center* 21 (2013): 2-86.
- Strasburger, Victor C. "Children, Adolescents, and the Media." *From the American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement*, Pediatrics, November 2013, Volume 132 / Issue 5

selfhout, M. H. Different types of Internet use, depression, and social anxiety: The role of perceived friendship quality. *Journal of Adolescence*, 32, 819–833.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2008.10.011>

Lester, Richard. Telephone interview. 29 October 2017