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## **Effects of Social Networks on Adolescent Mental Health and Social Development**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

Adolescence is a crucial period of development in which social networks play a significant role in shaping the mental health and social development of adolescents. The widespread use of social networks among adolescents has raised concerns about their potential positive and negative effects on adolescent mental health and social development. This literature review and analysis aim to examine the effects of social networks on adolescent mental health and social development. This paper will explore how social networks affect adolescent mental health, the possible positive and negative effects of social networks on adolescent social development, the various types of social networks, and how they differ in their effects on adolescent mental health and social development. By analyzing the existing literature on this topic, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effects of social networks on adolescent mental health and social development and suggest potential implications for policy and practice.

**Keywords:** social network, adolescent mental health, adolescent social development

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### **Effects of social networks on adolescent mental health:**

Adolescence is a time of significant changes in social-affective processing, and social relationships play an essential role in the mental health of adolescents. The study by Moody et al. examines the relationship between social interaction behaviors and adolescent mental health [1]. The study found that higher levels of social interaction are linked to lower levels of depression and anxiety in adolescents, and those with higher levels of social interaction have better mental health outcomes [1]. Social support from peers and family can buffer the negative effects of stress on adolescent mental health [1]. However, few network studies have examined relational determinants of self-esteem during any stage of adolescence, despite depression being studied in a social network framework [1]. The present study examines how social interaction dynamics are associated with mental health during the onset of adolescence and uses novel electronic technology to objectively gather network data among adolescents, making it the first study of its kind [1]. Longitudinal network behavior models indicate that gender similarity and perceived popularity are influential in the formation of social ties [1]. The study found that self-esteem and depressive symptoms are differential stratified by gender in early adolescent interaction networks. Girls with higher levels of depressive symptoms had interactions consistent with social inhibition, while boys showed robustness to depressive symptoms [1]. Rejection by peers can contribute to feelings of depression and social isolation, and adolescents who feel depressed are likely to experience social isolation from friends [1]. Meanwhile, changes in social-affective processing that begin around puberty include refinements in how adolescents interpret rewards and threats, self-perception, and seek inclusion in peer groups [1]. Adolescence is a period marked by heightened neurological plasticity, growth in social cognitive reasoning skills, and increased neurological sensitivity to social influences [1]. Therefore, interventions to promote mental health in adolescents should focus on preventing or increasing resilience to cyberbullying, ensuring adequate sleep and physical activity, and promoting positive social relationships with peers and family members [1].

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### **Effects of social networks on adolescent social development:**

The advent of social media and its widespread use among adolescents has raised concerns about its potential negative effects on their mental health. However, social media also presents opportunities for promoting positive mental health outcomes among adolescents [2]. Research has shown that social media can be used as an effective tool to educate and reach adolescents, providing them with resources for mental health promotion [2]. There are both benefits and challenges associated with using social media for mental health promotion among adolescents. For instance, while social media can provide adolescents with a sense of contentedness, it can also lead to feelings of isolation and depression if used excessively or inappropriately. Adolescents often use social media and the internet to seek information about mental health, and social media can serve as a platform for disseminating accurate and helpful information [2]. In addition, social support from peers and family is crucial for buffering the negative effects of stress on adolescent mental health, and social media can facilitate such support by connecting adolescents with others who share similar experiences and concerns. Therefore, it is important to

recognize the potential benefits of social media in promoting positive mental health outcomes among adolescents while also being mindful of its potential risks.

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### **Popular social networking platforms among adolescents:**

According to recent statistics, YouTube and TikTok are the most popular social networking platforms among adolescents. Around 75% of teens visit YouTube daily, while 58% of teens use TikTok daily [8]. In addition, 19% of teens use YouTube almost constantly, while 16% use TikTok almost constantly. Moreover, 15% use Snapchat almost constantly [8]. Snapchat and Instagram are also widely used among teens, with 51% and 50% respectively visiting these platforms daily [8]. Facebook's popularity among teens has significantly decreased from 71% to 32% [8]. TikTok, on the other hand, has become a popular social media platform among teens, with 67% of American teens using it [8]. Interestingly, black and Hispanic teens tend to use TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp more than white teens, while teenage boys prefer using YouTube, Twitch, and Reddit. Conversely, teenage girls prefer using TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat [8]. Overall, YouTube and TikTok are the most widely used social media platforms among adolescents.

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### **The factors influencing the usage of social networking platforms among adolescents:**

Adolescents have various preferences when it comes to communication methods. According to a study, adolescents prefer alternative modes like WhatsApp and voice-over social networking platforms like Instagram and Facebook for communication on any given topic. The choice of social networks was on average lower than other modes like WhatsApp and voice [9]. It is important to understand the phenomenon among participating adolescents to properly use social networks as a means of communication [9]. As adolescence progresses, cognitive abilities develop, allowing them to speak verbally about topics with increasing confidence. Adolescents aged 17-19 years use Facebook and voice modes more on average compared to adolescents aged 14-16 years [9]. Social networks and instant messaging are chosen based on the circumstances or situations. Adolescents approaching adulthood have a greater share of opportunities to talk and discuss private topics like family, loved ones, and problems related to themselves. The voice mode is significant for talking about oneself and a special person with increasing age [9]. Maintaining social connections with peers is a motive for using social networking platforms among adolescents, but adolescents believe that social media has a mostly negative effect on people their age [10][9]. Females use digital media longer than males, and adolescents spend more time on WhatsApp and Instagram than on Facebook. The more time adolescents spend on social networking platforms, the higher the possibility of depression [9][11]. Various factors influence the degree of social media usage in children, but these factors are not mentioned in the given text [11].

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### **Promoting Positive Use of Social Media among Adolescents:**

Social media has become an essential aspect of adolescent life and development. Adolescents use social media to complement and reinforce offline relationships, practices, and processes [12]. Social media can reflect adolescents' offline lives, and be useful in the service of critical adolescent developmental tasks [12]. Despite concerns about the reliability of information on social media, it is viewed positively as a resource and can reduce stigma and encourage social networking among young adults [13]. Social media can also be harnessed for physical health promotion and mental health promotion, as it can be tailored to the priorities of intended users and is an inexpensive way to have conversations about mental health, impart information, and challenge stigma. Furthermore, social media has the potential to support adolescents' coping with stress and provide both reinforcement and release from stress for adolescents [13]. Social media platforms have been linked to new forms of political participation among adolescents and can provide opportunities for learning about mental health issues [13]. While there are concerns about the reliability of information on social media, adolescents rely on it as a source of information and as a tool of relaxation [13][12]. It is essential to understand the possible benefits and challenges of using social media to promote mental health among adolescents, and listening to the voices of adolescents, educationalists and mental health practitioners can help identify effective strategies for promoting positive use of social media among adolescents [13]. In conclusion, social media can be utilized effectively for mental health promotion among adolescents, but it is important to consider it in the context of the changing views of adolescents and their position in society [13].

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### **Effective Guidelines for Promoting Mental and Social Development of Adolescents through Social Media Usage:**

Effective guidelines for promoting the mental and social development of adolescents through social media usage should be established, taking into consideration the adolescents' home environment and maturity levels. Age-appropriate social media use is vital in promoting the mental and social development of adolescents. Social media can be beneficial for adolescents during times of stress, social isolation, or mental health challenges [14]. Social media provides social support, friendship, and emotional intimacy for teens, which can contribute to their mental and social development [14]. However, it is important to allocate significant resources for ongoing scientific examination of social media's positive and negative effects on adolescent development, including long-term studies, research on younger children, and marginalized populations. Encouraging data sharing between tech companies and independent scientists for comprehensive analysis is also necessary [14]. Effective guidelines should be established for promoting the mental and social development of adolescents through safe and balanced social media use. To achieve this, adolescents need to develop psychologically-informed competencies and skills for safe and meaningful social media use [14]. Offering training in social media literacy can help promote the mental and social development of adolescents through social media usage [14]. Therefore, guidelines should be established to promote safe and balanced social media use,

which would contribute positively to the mental and social development of adolescents. Some guidelines that can be effective for the mental and social development of adolescents are mentioned here.

- Every social account of the adolescent must be opened with valid identity information so that no adolescent can't be able to open any fake account with invalid data.
- Social media can provide useful articles or news based on the age of the adolescents when they are active on social networks for their mental and social development.
- The connection list of the adolescent of each social network must be supervised by a valid guardian of the adolescent. To do this, the adolescent must provide a guardian's email or contact information at the time of account creation. When a new social friend or connection is added to the adolescent account then it will be notified to the guardian. In this way, the guardians can monitor who is connecting with their children through social networks.
- The usage limit of the adolescent must be set by each social network individually to prevent the addiction of using social networks.
- The social content that can be harmful to the social and mental development of the adolescent must be filtered by the social network.
- The adolescent will be able to remove the guardian's supervision after a certain age.

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### Conclusion:

Social networks are playing a vital role now and adolescents are attracted to social networks very easily. Social networks have both positive and negative impacts on the social and mental development of adolescents. Better development of mental and social health is very important for every adolescent. If adolescents grow up with proper mental and social development then they can be good human beings in the future. This article suggests how the appropriate use of social networks and the proper guidance can help adolescents with social and mental development.

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