

SOCIAL MEDIA AND TEEN SELF- PERCEPTION:

A survey-based study on confidence, comparison and social pressure among students aged 14–17

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Abstract: Social media plays a significant role in shaping teenage identity and self-perception. This study investigates the impact of social media on confidence, social comparison, and perceived pressure among students aged 14–17. A survey of 52 students was conducted using a structured questionnaire. The findings reveal that a majority of students engage in social comparison and experience pressure to present an idealized version of themselves online. While social media supports connection and self-expression, it also negatively affects confidence for many users. The study highlights the dual influence of social media and suggests the need for mindful usage among teenagers.

Keywords: Social Media, Teenagers, Self-Perception, Social Comparison, Confidence, Online Pressure, Adolescents, Digital Behavior

I.INTRODUCTION

In today's digital world, social media platforms have become an integral part of teenagers' daily lives. Platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat are not only used for communication but also for self-expression and identity formation. Teenagers often present curated versions of their lives online, which may not reflect reality. This exposure to idealized content can lead to comparison, pressure, and changes in self-confidence. Adolescence is a sensitive phase where individuals are developing their identity, making them more vulnerable to external influences. Therefore, it is important to understand how social media affects teenagers' perceptions of themselves.

II.RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a survey-based approach. A structured questionnaire was created using Google Forms. The survey included multiple-choice questions, Likert scale statements, and one open-ended question. The sample consisted of 52 students aged between 14 and 17 years. Responses were collected anonymously to ensure honest answers. The collected data was analyzed using percentages and simple comparisons to identify trends and patterns.

III. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The data collected from 52 students shows clear patterns in how social media is used and how it influences self-perception among teenagers. Firstly, social media usage among respondents is quite high. A significant number of students reported spending more than two hours daily on platforms like Instagram and Snapchat. This indicates that social media is not just a casual activity but a regular part of their daily routine. Because of this high exposure, its impact on thoughts and emotions becomes more significant.

One of the most noticeable findings is the level of social comparison. Around 71% of students agreed that they compare their lives with others on social media. This comparison is not always direct but often happens subconsciously while viewing posts related to appearance, lifestyle, achievements, or social life. This suggests that social media creates a space where people constantly evaluate themselves in relation to others.

When it comes to confidence, 62% of respondents stated that social media affects how they feel about themselves. Many students reported that after scrolling through posts, they sometimes feel less confident or question their own lives. This shows that even if social media is meant for entertainment, it can have deeper emotional effects.

Another important aspect is the pressure to maintain an image. About 65% of students admitted that they feel the need to present a “perfect” version of themselves online. This includes carefully selecting photos, editing content, or thinking multiple times before posting. This behavior indicates that social media is not always a space for authenticity, but often for performance.

At the same time, the data also highlights positive aspects. A majority of students (72%) said that social media helps them stay connected with friends and family. Around 60% also agreed that it allows them to express themselves freely. This shows that social media is not entirely negative but has both advantages and disadvantages.

Overall, the interpretation of the data suggests that social media has a dual impact, it connects people and provides a platform for expression, but also creates comparison, pressure, and emotional challenges.

IV. FINDINGS

Based on the analysis of the data, the following key findings were observed:

1. High Usage Levels

Social media is used extensively by teenagers, with most students spending several hours daily. This high usage increases its influence on thoughts, behavior and emotions.

2. Prevalence of Social Comparison

A large majority of students engage in comparing themselves with others online. This comparison often focuses on appearance, lifestyle and achievements, which can affect self-image.

3. Impact on Confidence

Social media has a noticeable impact on self-confidence. For many students, this impact is negative, especially when they feel they do not match the standards they see online.

4. Pressure to Maintain an Ideal Image

Many teenagers feel the need to present a curated or “perfect” version of their lives. This indicates that social media influences not only how they feel but also how they behave.

5. Role of External Validation

Likes, comments, and reactions play an important role in shaping how teenagers feel about themselves. This shows a dependence on external validation.

6. Positive Aspects Cannot Be Ignored

Despite the challenges, social media helps in maintaining relationships and allows self-expression. This highlights that its impact is not entirely negative.

V.SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions can be made:

1. Promoting Mindful Usage

Teenagers should be encouraged to use social media consciously rather than mindlessly scrolling. Being aware of how content affects emotions can help reduce negative impact.

2. Awareness Programs in Schools

Schools can organize sessions or workshops on digital well-being, where students learn about the psychological effects of social media and how to manage them.

3. Encouraging Real vs Online Distinction

Students should be taught that what they see online is often curated and not a complete reflection of reality. Understanding this can reduce unnecessary comparison.

4. Limiting Screen Time

Setting reasonable limits on daily social media use can help maintain balance and reduce overexposure.

5. Open Conversations at Home

Parents should create a comfortable environment where teenagers can talk about their online experiences without fear of judgment.

6. Focusing on Self-Worth Beyond Social Media

Teenagers should be encouraged to build confidence through real-life skills, hobbies, and achievements rather than relying on online validation.

VI.CONCLUSION

This study concludes that social media plays a significant role in shaping how teenagers perceive themselves. It is not just a platform for communication, but also a space where identity, confidence, and self-worth are influenced.

The findings clearly show that while social media offers benefits such as connection and self-expression, it also creates challenges like comparison, pressure, and dependence on validation. These effects are especially important during adolescence, a stage where individuals are still developing their sense of self.

However, it is important to note that social media itself is not entirely harmful. Its impact depends largely on how it is used and understood. With the right awareness and balanced usage, teenagers can benefit from social media without letting it negatively affect their confidence and mental well-being.

In conclusion, social media is a powerful tool, and learning to use it wisely is essential for maintaining a healthy self-perception.

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