

The Causes of Adolescents' Social Anxiety in Social Media

Jinxuan Wang^{1,*}

¹WLSA Shanghai Academy,
Shanghai, China

*Corresponding author:
wangivonna@gmail.com

Abstract:

This article focuses on adolescents' social anxiety related to social media. Social anxiety plays a significant role in social media in adolescents' lives. The literature review examines a multitude of factors that contribute to the development and exacerbation of social anxiety among adolescents who are deeply immersed in the digital realm. Multiple factors contribute to social anxiety, including self-presentation and body image issues, where unrealistic ideals on social media can lower self-worth and cause dissatisfaction; social comparison, which can reduce self-esteem; fear of missing out, leading to inadequacy and anxiety; cyberbullying, which causes victims to be embarrassed and fear of social interactions, and isolation. Also emphasizes the importance of helping adolescents avoid negative social media impacts and build social confidence, suggesting measures like mindfulness and a healthy lifestyle. Future research should focus on the long-term effects of phenomena and interventions, requiring comprehensive, extended studies for insights into sustainability and impact. Identifying and refining effective interventions is key, involving rigorous experimental designs like randomized trials and longitudinal studies to ensure lasting benefits. Interdisciplinary collaboration is essential for integrating diverse expertise and achieving robust solutions.

Keywords: Social anxiety; social media; adolescents; body image; social comparison.

1. Introduction

Social anxiety is a mental health problem, and people who suffer from social anxiety always feel uncomfortable being watched by others. They fear social interactions such as conversations with strangers, participating in group activities, and even eating in

public. This problem is common in young people. 90% of the cases of social anxiety occur by the age of 23 [1]. Social media is a platform that allows people to share content, including photos, ideas, and other forms of expression. Nowadays, there are many popular social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, etc. According to the research,

adolescents spend approximately 4.8 hours every day. It shows that social media plays a significant role in adolescents' lives. As a consequence, they have many opportunities to interact with the content on social media. However, they can view both positive and negative content, and the negative content may influence them.

The research shows the relationship between using social media and social anxiety [2]. Some people use social media for consolation, to reduce loneliness, and as a substitute for face-to-face relationships. The result of the study shows that some adolescents are anxious about the things they post on social media how many people like the content they post, and what their friends or families commend about their posts. According to Harison, social anxiety is the fear of negative evaluations, avoiding social in a new environment, and feeling depressed when getting along with others [3]. Therefore, this article aims to deeply analyze the aspects of social anxiety that can be caused by using social media.

2. Method

An extensive and thorough literature search was meticulously carried out utilizing the renowned database known as Science Direct. In this comprehensive search, specific keywords were carefully inputted to explore various aspects related to social media, social anxiety, usage patterns, negative outcomes, and excessive behaviors. The criteria for including studies in this review were rigorously defined to ensure the relevance and quality of the research. Specifically, studies were selected if they met the following criteria: (i) the opinions were focused on adolescents, (ii) the time when the literature uploaded should be after 2000, (iii) it should contain effects of social media, (iv) the consequences should link to social anxiety.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Self-Presentation and Body Images

Social media contributes a lot to the change of body image ideals and perceptions, and it provides a platform for developing self-presentation. They can post pictures about themselves, and it is common for many people to think that the evidence that they are good-looking is the high attention rate of others, especially strangers. However, this thought can cause individuals to send unrealistic presentations to increase the attention of others [4]. There are 800 million images being posted on Instagram every day, and the platform has caused people to have subconscious misconceptions that it is idealistic to have these unrealistic appearances.

The interview done by Young shows that idealistic presentations can cause higher dissatisfaction in bodies. They only post when they look their best [4]. If they think their bodies are not thin enough or lack other conditions to follow the idealistic presentations, the frequency of posts would decrease.

Adolescents find it easier to follow the public's opinion, they usually have less ability for independent thinking, and they are also in a stage where their values are being established. The unrealistic self-presentation on Instagram can impact personal self-worth and anxiety. If someone thinks he or she does not conform to the ideals that social media created, they may have negative evaluations of their body. Instagram and other social media have already caused a sense of embarrassment when posting photos, while it also causes less confidence in real life. When adolescents spend their time with a large group, such as school, they are more likely to mind their appearances. However, unrealistic standards of bodies in social media may cause many adolescents to have lower self-worth and feel that they can not be judged as good by others. Therefore, they can be afraid of participating in group activities and develop relationships with others.

3.2 Social comparison

Unrealistic self-presentation can cause incorrect judgment and evaluation of a person. The core of the anxiety caused by it is social comparison. Through the development of social media, adolescents have more opportunities to expand their horizons. They can view many events that successful people post on social media. They also see a lot of people with perfect images, like exquisite faces and slim bodies. They can compare their appearances and behaviors with the people they see. This situation may have both positive and negative effects.

Social comparison can help adolescents have a clearer perception of themselves. During the comparison with others, they may think back on the things they did and re-view themselves. They are probably aware that some little things that did not matter before now seem meaningful. For example, when a stranger asks for directions, tell him patiently. This not-surprising behavior actually reflects his or her kindness. Nowadays, people are more vigilant and busier than before, and they rarely stop for strangers. Kindness become invaluable in society. Therefore, they may notice that they are actually nice people. When they view others' actions, they may think about how they can improve themselves. This explains that social comparison can help adolescents learn about themselves and increase motivation to self-improve and self-evaluation [5]. This will help them to be more confident in their relationships

with others.

However, many unhealthy comparisons occurred. Social media make unrealistic standards of appearances become popular [6]. Adolescents may compare themselves with the idealized content others post. This would cause negative consequences for self-concept development [7]. A recent study found that during the adolescent period, teenagers are experiencing many physical and psychological changes. They may desire to get recognition from others. However, they usually value themselves through physical attractions, and social media plays a significant role in conveying information about body images. With the increase in time that adolescents spend on social media, they focus more on physical change and personal appearances. Social media causes a lot of deformed aesthetics. People often see many thin people posting their photos and saying that they think they are too fat. Edited photos are also common on social media. Thin bodies for women and strong muscles for men become ideal body images. Those who do not have these ideal features may cause social appearance anxiety [8]. As a consequence, they will feel unconfident when they get along with others. If they always check are they look good, it produces much mental pressure for them. This phenomenon is more common in females. Young females make greater use of social media than adolescent males. It may promote social comparison, which has a negative impact on female self-esteem.

3.3 Fear of Missing oOut

Fear of missing out is defined as a sense of missing out on what one's peers are doing, in the know about, or own more or better than him or her [9]. The development of technology made it easier to receive messages as well as simpler to be addicted. Therefore, people can easily post their lives and view others through comparisons between them, which will cause them to be dissatisfied with their lives and behaviors [10]. Adolescents may constantly compare their lives to what their peers are doing, as shown on social media, such as when they are experiencing vacations. The comparison can lead them to question themselves. For example, if they see their peers attending academic competitions and getting rewards, they may wonder whether they are too lazy in studying or think others are more capable. They will have a sense of inadequacy, which means the experience of being exposed to a situation where the self is seen as lesser in some regard. The feeling of inadequacy is continue existing and leads to a sense of inferiority [11]. In the long term, they will often find their disadvantages and become unconfident. They will also think about whether they are fit and good enough to join their peers in making friends.

Furthermore, when they are dissatisfied with themselves, it is easier to become irritable, which will cause them to be rude to others and have a bad temper [12]. Adolescents may always be angry at the one who performs better, which may cause social rejection that others do not understand them [13]. Being excluded can decrease self-esteem and meaningful existence, as well as a lack of belonging, which will cause anxiety [14]. However, the objectives of many adolescents who fear missing out is to make sure that they are good enough to maintain good relationships with others, but because they will have less sense of belonging and their self-esteem is being damaged, they become more unable to get along with others. Therefore, they will be anxious about their interpersonal communication.

3.4 Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place online on social media. It includes sending negative, harmful, or mean content to someone or sharing personal private information with someone else [15]. It will make the victims feel embarrassed and cannot get rid of it. People who organize cyberbullying usually do not need to be responsible for it. Moreover, because they cannot see the reactions of the victims, they often fail to recognize their faults and show empathy [16].

Teenagers have less judgment of the behaviors they see, so some adolescents may imitate these actions, while the bully often chooses to bully peers [17]. Therefore, cyberbullying has become widespread recently. When adolescents are suffering from cyberbullying, he or she will probably become anxious in their interactions with others because they fear being harmed. However, because they have less social skills to communicate with others in face-to-face interactions, they prefer to communicate with strangers online. Therefore, there are more risks for cyberbullying, and victimization may cause the levels of social anxiety to become higher, which creates a vicious cycle [18].

3.5 Isolation

Lack of social contact can lead to social isolation [19]. The isolation often affects a person's inability to form social connections, which diminishes their sense of happiness and makes them feel difficulty in maintaining high-quality and meaningful relationships. Nowadays, adolescents spend more time using social media, which might reduce the opportunities for face-to-face conversation, which makes people feel isolated [20]. Additionally, research shows that when adolescents use social media, they usually do not communicate with each other [21].

Therefore, many adolescents used to bear all their emotions alone, which creates a sense of isolation. This kind of experience of isolation can make adolescents feel uncomfortable in real-life situations. And because they often enjoy the time on social media, they may be influenced by some negative information and lack of personal thinking and judgment. Also, they usually view the content created by others without giving their own opinions and recommendations. To maintain a healthy relationship, it is important to listen to others and show their consolations or arguments. In the long term, they may find that it is more difficult to get along with others because they are losing their social skills. These factors can significantly impact adolescents' mental health, leading to anxiety and depression. As adolescents engage more in social media, it creates a bigger gap between the digital world and virtual interactions, increasing their sense of isolation. Ultimately, it causes a cycle of isolation.

4. Implications and Recommendations

It is important to be aware of the signs of social anxiety. The parents and the educators are both responsible for guiding adolescents to avoid negative content on social media, which may impact social anxiety, and helping them build social confidence. They also need to fully understand the causes and consequences of social anxiety, understand the feelings of adolescents who are extremely afraid of social situations, and practice supporting adolescents.

According to the study, there are many measures to implement to build social confidence. It is important to practice mindfulness, and it is to practice being present without judgment [22]. When adolescents are mindful, they do not react to the judgment and evaluation from others. It can improve social confidence and the quality of life. Besides, the quality of sleep is important. People who suffer from social anxiety usually have sleep problems. It shows that poor quality of sleep will have a negative impact on anxiety. To prevent social anxiety, relaxing and comfortable sleeping and feeling tranquil and peaceful plays a significant role. Furthermore, healthy lifestyles and habits should not be ignored. Exercising regularly and avoiding or minimizing caffeine can improve mental attitude.

Further research on this topic can focus on the deeper consequences of social anxiety related to social media, such as the long-term effects, which will continue to impact on mental health of the transition of adolescents into adulthood. And how social anxiety can affect their feeling of social relationships over time. For example, whether adolescents who suffer from social anxiety would still fear face-to-face interactions with others when they grow up

into adults. In addition, research can aim to find effective interventions to help adolescents with social anxiety, to discover the programs which aim to build social confidence and manage with mental health problems. What's more, the use of social media can also contribute to further studies, such as the time spent on social media, the impact of big data, content that most adolescents are interested in, and so on.

5. Conclusion

Social media has become an integral part of adolescents' lives but causes factors contributing to social anxiety. Self-presentation and body images on social media can lead to unrealistic presentations to attract attention. Moreover, can cause adolescents who do not match the idealized body images to feel dissatisfied with their bodies and appearances, which makes them fear judgment and avoid social interactions. The core cause of this situation is social comparison; unhealthy social comparison often has negative results in self-esteem and social appearance anxiety; adolescents will feel unconfident when they get along with others, and it produces much mental pressure for them. Fear of missing out can cause adolescents to constantly compare themselves with their peers, which can lead to feelings of inadequacy, inferiority, and anxiety about maintaining relationships with others because they may be dissatisfied with their own situations and conditions, they may think they are less successful making friends with their capable peers. Therefore, they will be afraid of interpersonal communication.

Cyberbullying on social media usually makes victims feel embarrassed and anxious about their interactions, and if adolescents are suffering from social anxiety, they are more sensitive than others, so they are more likely to be the object of cyberbullying, which causes a vicious circle. Isolation is also a factor; excessive social media use may reduce the opportunities for face-to-face conversations and lead to loneliness. As time passes, adolescents will lack social skills. Adolescents and their parents should be aware of the signs of social anxiety and actively build social confidence by practicing mindfulness, improving sleep quality, and developing good living habits.

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