

CYSF Written Project

The Effects of Social Media on Adolescents

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Grade 8

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**Table of Contents**

Introduction.....

    Problem.....

    Method.....

        Participants.....

        Materials.....

        Procedure.....

Research.....

Data.....

Conclusion.....

Citations.....

Acknowledgements.....

**Introduction:**

## Problem:

Teens' time on social media is on the rise. In 2018, 45% of teens said that they were 'almost constantly' online (Nesi, 2020). Although it cannot be proven to be a causal relationship, it is often observed that social media use has a strong correlation with the mental health of teens, mostly in regards to fatigue levels, mood, and feelings about themselves. This project is focused on further investigating the link between social media and the decrease of mental health in teens. Better understanding this link will support the advancement of support programs and systems for teens.

**Method:**

## Participants:

Seven participants were recruited from Renert School via a posting on the school communication website. In addition, three participants were recruited from Calgary Police Cadet Corps via a poster on a bulletin board at Westwinds Campus where the cadets train. Participants included in this study were between the ages of twelve and seventeen, and were users of Instagram, Snapchat, or Tiktok. Once the participants were chosen and the consent forms were signed by a parent or guardian, they were assigned a random ID number to preserve their anonymity when completing the survey.

## Material:

The software used for the surveying of the participants was Google Forms, as it is easy to use and provides a familiar platform for participants. When taking the survey, the students were told to complete it on their own time, in any space they find comfortable.

**Procedure:**

After seeking out participants who expressed an interest in participating, their parents and/or guardians were contacted for consent. Once a consent form had been signed, a participant was sent an email with a link to the survey and an anonymous identification number. When all the participants had filled out the survey, they were all entered in a draw for a Tim Hortons card.

**Research:**

According to the Mayo Clinic (2022), social media has both advantages and disadvantages. The advantages include: social media offers platforms for creating social networks, a source of entertainment, and a place to express oneself. Social media disadvantages include: Distracting academic work, sleep disruption and/or deprivation, exposure to bullying behavior, and exposure to peer pressure.

In 2018 45% of teens said they were almost constantly online (Nesi, 2020)

In the same paper it was said that excessive social media use may be linked to:

Suicide, self harm, body image concerns, eating disorders, as well as negative peer evaluation and social exclusion

Decline Mental health Canada:

The World Health Organization estimates that mental illness affects 450 million people globally and is the primary cause of disability. It impacts almost 6.7 million of individuals here in Canada. By the time they become 40, one in two Canadians will actually have experienced a mental disorder. These concerning figures only demonstrate how important it is for each and every one of individuals to become involved in some way. The total economic cost of mental illness in Canada is estimated to be \$51 billion annually, taking into account health care expenses, lost productivity, and lower quality of life due to health issues.

Among Canadians suffering from a major depressive episode, just half receive "potentially adequate care." When it comes to getting the mental health care they need, one-third of Canadians who are 15 years of age or older believe their requirements were not fully addressed. Seventy-five percent of kids suffering from mental health issues lack access to specialized treatment programs.

**Data:**

Demographics asked: 50% of the participants in the survey were girls, 40% boys, and 10% prefer not to say. Participants ranged in age from twelve to seventeen, with 10% being twelve, 20% being thirteen, 40% being fourteen, 20% being sixteen, and 10% were seventeen years old. Participants ranged in grade from grades seven to twelve, with 10% in grade seven, 40% in grade eight, 20% in grade nine, 20% in grade eleven, and 10% in grade twelve.

The top three social media platforms used were TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat tying for second, and Youtube.

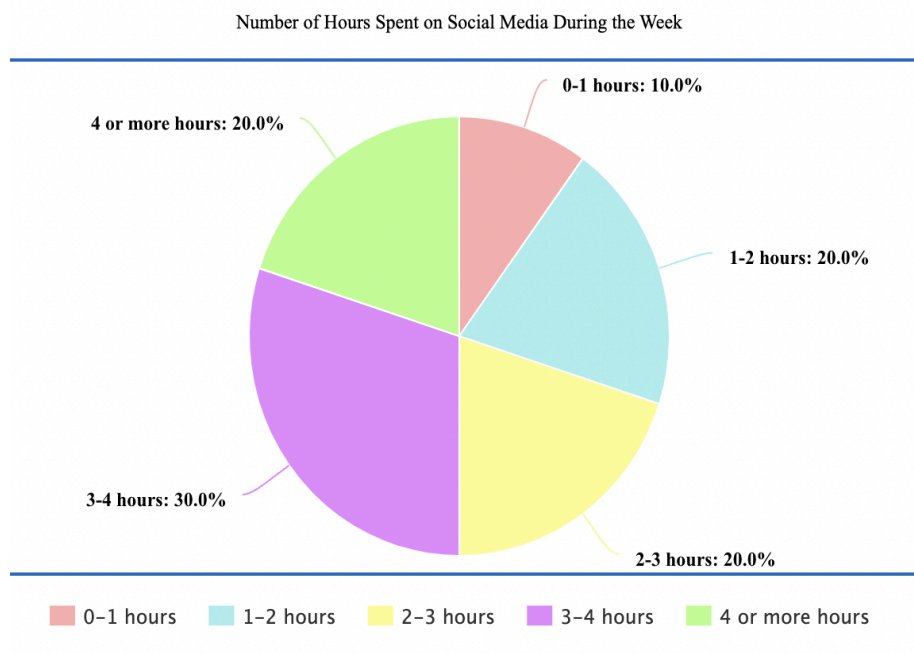
Positive effects:

More than half of participants said that social media has helped them express themselves, positively has affecting their relationships with their friends, exposed them to different cultures and current events, has helped them find new hobbies, and helped them communicate with their friends and family

#### Negative effects:

More than half of the participants said that they have been a witness to bullying and rumor spreading on social media, that social media negatively affects their grades and their sleep pattern. One hundred percent of the participants said social media negatively affects their ability to focus.

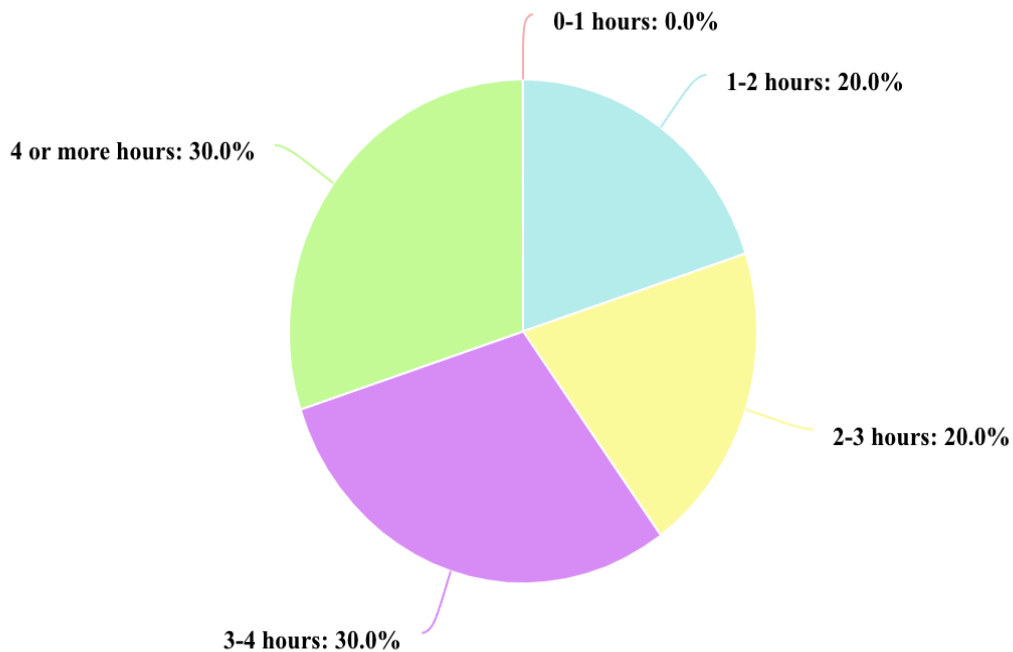
#### Quantitative Data:



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Number of Hours Spent on Social Media During the Weekend

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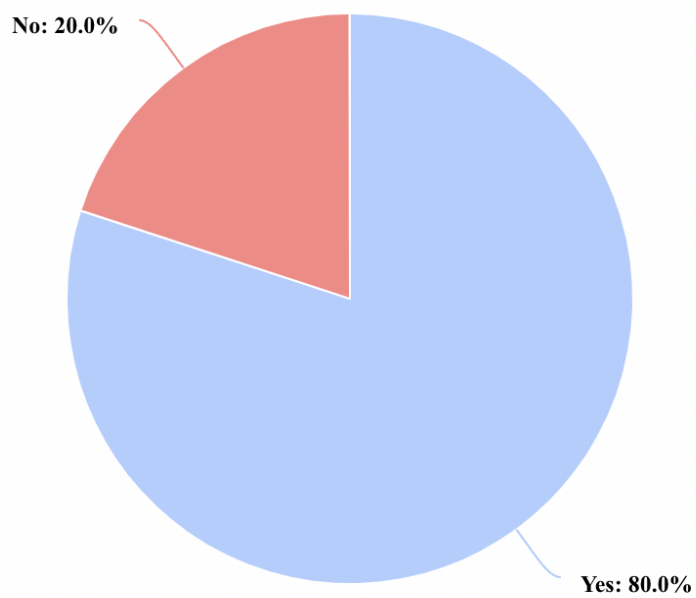
0-1 hours    1-2 hours    2-3 hours    3-4 hours    4 or more hours

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Do You Think Social Media Distracts You From School?

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Yes    No

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In the question- “do you think social media has affected how you think of yourself, and if so how?”

40% of the participants wrote that social media has negatively affected their thoughts about their ideal body image. Although earlier in the survey when the question “does social media make you feel worse about your body image?” More than half said that it does, but in the last question 40% specifically wrote that they feel like social media has made them feel worse about their body images.

### **Conclusion:**

Overall, social media is not as beneficial to adolescents as it was thought to be. This, however, can be changed with a few adjustments. Making social media more youth appropriate when it comes to negative body image and low self esteem provoking media, it can allow many younger individuals to thrive online.

### Sources of error:

As a result, participants were told to complete the survey on their own time at their own space, which may have resulted in bias depending on what environment they were in and what people were around. The research was not compared to other studies in this field or validated by individuals in that field. The study consisted of a small sample size which may have affected the results.

### Recommendations:



Banning social media is not an option, but there are ways to make it easier for teenagers to access mental health help. Firstly, the government could provide legislation mandating the hosting of advertisements for the mental health helpline on social media platforms. Thus when adolescents feel like they need to talk to someone but cannot access a trusted adult, they have the option to call or text the social media helpline right at their fingertips. Another recommendation would be for government legislation mandating social media platforms to include a visible timer measuring social media usage. This would show how long an individual has been on that platform for that particular session and cumulative for the last 24 hours. This would be helpful when someone means to go on social media just for twenty minutes, but do not realize that an hour has already passed. By placing a time, it may help minimize the time spent by teenagers on social media platforms.

**Citations:**

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