

The Relationship between Family and Social Media

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ABSTRACT

In the last few decades, social media has become a vital component of life for adolescents all over the world. As social media has gradually preoccupied the majority of the time of adolescents' daily life, leading to concerns about the negative consequences such as academic achievement, social connection, sleep quality and mental health. Family has been identified as the primary and foremost component, among others, that has a strong link to social integration and social media addiction. This review aims to discuss the association between family and adolescents' social media addiction, which will focus on three causative family-related factors: parenting style, family relationships, and the socioeconomic status of the family. Specifically, the communication between parents and adolescents are important in their developmental history, and coping strategies and prevention of addictive behaviour. In addition, dysfunctional family has a close relationship with social media addiction. For parents, healthcare providers, and intervention developers, it is necessary to consider family factors in order to support adolescents' health and development. The discussion part of the literature still has the limitation of addressing possible strategies and pathways for families to support adolescents' health and development.

Keywords: social media addiction, adolescents, family, parents.

1. INTRODUCTION

The global expansion of social networks, social media, and the internet users have undergone substantial quantitative and qualitative changes [1]. For adolescents who have grown up during the rapid expansion of digital technology, social media has integrated into life, education, and culture. A growing number of online communication forms around the world such as Whatsapp, Snapchat, Facebook, Weibo, and Wechat have become the primary mode of communication for adolescents around the world, which has built a bridge between virtual communication and social relations.

The convenience and efficiency of social media have been recognised. It can be advantageous in many ways, including self-learning, wide access to information, lowering the barriers of distance interaction and communication, and supporting collaborative group engagement and activities [1]. However, a dramatic increase in reliance on social media and excessive use of it can be a double-edged sword. For adolescents, a decline in academic performance, social isolation, and impaired mental health well-being have been identified as negative consequences of this phenomenon [1,2]. The

examples include the depression and emotional distress caused by cyber fraud, bullying, and narcissism [3].

Social media tends to have strong reinforcement because of its strong interactive characteristic. As the users continue to have online conversations and check on the information and replies, it can automatically turn into a cycle of habitual and monitoring behaviours that can result in social media addiction [4]. Poor management of social media usage can increase the risk of developing addictive use behaviour. In many countries, social media addiction has become a growing health concern [5]. Bányai et al. [6]'s study found that among 5961 adolescents with an average sixteen years old, nearly 4.5% of them were at risk of social networking addiction. It can be contradictive, especially during the period of lockdown or quarantine due to COVID-19. Specifically, adolescents and schools rely on social networking sites for learning and discussion purposes; adolescents would also require social media to maintain social connections with their friends or access to news and information. It is contradictive as adolescence is a vital stage in a person's developmental history. Being addicted to social media and prolonged exposure to social media during the formative period without interventions might lead to irreversible harm to life.

Family-related factors have become a focus as family members take the most responsibility and are also well-placed to look after their children. Studies investigated that family relationships, including cohesion and expressiveness are related to addictive use of social media and internet addiction; excessive social media use can negatively impact on parent-child relationships; adolescents with divorced parents, low-income families, and families with people who are complete parents might have an impact on their social media use [7-9]. Meanwhile, researchers focused on the relationship between family and social media use, primarily to develop guidelines for parents and policymakers to protect their children from social media risks [7-9]. This review paper examined the association between family and social media addiction from three aspects: parenting style, family relationships, and family socioeconomic status.

2. THE DEFINITION AND IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION

2.1. The Definition of Social Media Addiction

A pattern of habitual behaviour characterised by excessive use and concern for social media, which is motivated by an uncontrollable urge [4]. This compulsive use can be understood as social media addiction. It consumes people's time and effort, interfering with their daily activities and impairing other important life aspects [4]. Manifestations of social media addiction involve symptoms associated with sensory perception, emotional and physical responses, as well as psychological, social or interpersonal issues [4].

2.2. The Negative Impact of Social Media Addiction for Adolescents

As with the diverse benefits of social media, the negative impact also covers many dimensions of people's life. Based on the study by Boer et al. [5], adolescents who addicted to social media had a lower life satisfaction than the compared group. This was reflected on different domains of life well-being such as social well-being, school well-being, physical and mental well-being. In more detail, adolescents can experience the symptoms similar to other addicted behaviour such as conflicts, self-regulation and tolerance [2]. Intrapsychic conflicts are typically characterised by a subjective loss of control, whereas interpersonal conflicts may involve issues pertaining to social relationships when work or education is compromised [2]. In real life, it can be seen in school performance, relationships, daily activities and mental health. The cross-cultural research study conducted by Tsitsika et al. [7] indicated that two or more hours of use of social media per day were associated with internalising problems and reduced academic performance and activity [7]. These are partially

consistent with the results of several other studies [1,8], that there was a link between addictive social media use and dropped grades on academic record.

Except the school performance, social media have a negative impact psychologically and cognitively. It is demonstrated by Haand and Shuwang [9] that adolescents felt more depressed as the level of social media addiction became higher. Anxiety, stress, and feelings of hopelessness appeared to be closely related to long-term excessive use of social media [9]. This point of view was also supported by Jiang et al. [10], who revealed that using Weibo, China's equivalent of Twitter, had a negative impact on information comprehension.

3. THE CAUSE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION: FROM A FAMILY'S PERSPECTIVE

In the discussion of the nature of the behaviour of social media addiction, family has been seen as one of the most important indicators that can significantly influence a person's behaviour [11]. Family function refers to the way of family interaction to carry out its duty for fulfilling family function [12]. van Dijk et al. [11] explored the family function particularly about how family members play their roles, manage their daily routines, and communicate and connect emotionally. These elements can play the fundamental role in a person's childhood and development history. As an essential aspect of family environment, family function can impact on adolescents' physical, social and emotional health [11]. As a result, a dysfunctional family can endanger all aspects of a child's development. In comparison, a well-functioning family would be beneficial for adolescents to feel comfortable and free to express their thoughts, interact well with their surroundings, and feel more connected to their family rather than the electronic devices they own. According to Yayman and Bilgin [13], there was a noteworthy positive association between social media addiction and unhealthy family functions. Lin et al. [12] has also demonstrated that positive family function can be helpful for minimising social media addiction behaviour.

3.1. Parenting Style

Parenting style has a strong relationship with social media addiction [14]. It is interesting to note that although parenting styles can be categorised, such as democratic and authoritative, and each has its own definition, advantages and disadvantages in psychology. In fact, parenting styles most likely need to be person-centered in education. Individual personality and tolerance would be considered, and parents might then adjust their way of communicating when educating children. The evidence concluded some valuable characteristics of parenting styles rather than comparing

and figuring out which style can be most beneficial for adolescents to cope with social media addiction or to develop prevention strategies [14]. Arokiasamy et al. [14] investigated the importance of parental attachment and parenting styles for adolescents to overcome internet addiction at a young age and recognised the crucial impact of parents and their children's verbal and non-verbal communication, attachment, and love on children's developing self-esteem, health, and behaviour. This observation is partially consistent with the findings of Bloemen and De Coninck [15], who discovered that parental support and control over social media use act as a moderator of the relationship between family characteristics and internet addiction. In addition, the father's support and control can lower the level of internet addiction among adolescents [15].

It is undeniable that parent-child relationships are unique and irreplaceable. If adolescents perceive non-acceptance, lack of response in interaction, and neglect from families, they seek support from social media, which offers a place to fulfil their unmet emotional needs [16]. Adolescents who experience any of the above circumstances can live with low family satisfaction and under the impact of psychological stress. They can become more hostile towards parents or other relationships if there are minor changes in the parents or family environment. Tas [16] demonstrated that adolescents' depression and anxiety were negatively related to their satisfaction with their family. The more parental communication and support were provided to adolescents, the less social media addiction they experienced. Also, the perception of family support was negatively related to the degree of internet addiction [15,16].

Parenting styles and family relationships are correlated to an extent. It can depend on parents' perception regarding the above strategies and characteristics, personal developmental history and life experience. From the adolescents' perspective, their acceptability of the parenting style and their cognition are equally essential.

3.2. Family Relationships

Tsitsika et al. [17] examined the determinants of adolescents' social media addiction, which then revealed that approximately 7% of them have experienced dysfunctional family relationships. Researchers have investigated the connection between family interactions and social media addiction among adolescents. They discovered that a high percentage of adolescent males who are addicted to social media have divorced parents and experienced emotional issues [17]. The study showed a correlation between parental divorce and social media association among adolescents of the same age [17]. Adolescence can be a complicated and challenging period for teenagers. While coping with the

physiological and cognitive changes, they also need to learn emotional regulation and build resilience as well as better understand themselves. Family conflicts, broken family relationships, and the following inability to cope with unpleasant emotions and environments can create extra stress and confusion for adolescents. Without guidance and a safe environment for them to disclose confusion and alleviate stress, social media and virtual communication might take the place.

Consistently, van Dijk et al. [11] have mentioned that adolescents are more likely to have difficulty self-regulating social media use impulses and experience stress and anxiety. Biologically, they are under the restriction of internet use during the period of developing fronto-limbic brain circuitry that affects their ability to self-control [11]. Inter-parental conflicts and divorce could lead to adolescents' escaping behaviour into social media and the internet in order to alleviate the stress and negative emotions from real life [11]. Stress has been recognised as a major trigger of social media addiction, and adolescents who have developed cognitive and behavioural strategies to avoid real-life challenges are more inclined to excessive social media use [11]. In spite of this, Jabbour et al. [18] assert that there is no obvious correlation between parental divorce and increased social media addiction. Ellis et al. [19] also argue that risk factors for developing addiction behaviour vary due to different susceptibilities and vulnerabilities, which depend on factors such as genetics, developmental environment, and culture.

Furthermore, adolescents' increasing reliance on social media and video games can lead to a decline in family interaction, an increase in family problems, and a decline in family relationships [20,21]. As a consequence of such a process, family members are confronted with an introverted family structure [21]. When resolving problems, an unhealthy communication style may accumulate more unpleasant experiences, trauma, and serious problems for both adolescents and parents [20,22]. All types of issues and difficulties in family structure can result in different orientations in young adolescents who grow up in an unhealthy family environment [22].

3.3. Socioeconomic Status of The Family

Living in a family with low socioeconomic status has a higher chance of addicting to social media resulting from the reduction of inhibitory control and increased stress and impulsiveness [21]. You et al. [22] investigated the relationships between sociodemographic variables, online communication and messaging, as well as social networks in early adolescence. Findings revealed that adolescents from the following households increased the possibility of exposure to social networking websites and subsequently online communication: low-educated mothers or low-educated fathers; single-parent

families; and low-income families [22]. A possible explanation includes the vicious cycle. This could be described as parents with low educational levels having a high likelihood of being preoccupied with social media, and their children may mimic this behaviour [22].

Additionally, parents with a low education level may be pay less attention on the time and content on website and social media while their children are using [21]. In comparison, parents with a higher level of education tend to be more vigilant about negative effects of screen time of social media, and stringent in setting rules for limiting excessive social media use, which can be beneficial for children's growth [30]. Lin and Laczniak [12] also demonstrated in their study that parents' media use and attitudes have a significant impact on adolescent media use in their study. They have pointed out that if parents can actively involve themselves in using social media, they can become more familiar and knowledgeable about this device and increase their efficacy and competency [12]. In the next step, parents may be able to use their power to mediate social media influences and their impact on adolescents [12]. In contrast, while active use of social media may increase adolescents' interactional empowerment, they may develop more positive views of social media and begin to believe that there is no need to moderate or restrict adolescents' use of social media [12].

4. CONCLUSION

The key discussion points of the study revolve mainly around the association between parenting style, family relationship, the family's socioeconomic status, and social media addiction among adolescents. Regarding parenting styles, support from family, the communication between parents and adolescents are important in their developmental history, and coping strategies and prevention of addictive behaviour. In the family relationship, dysfunctional family such as parental divorce has a close relationship with social media addiction. The living environment can impact adolescents biologically and psychologically, and its impact might prolong in their entire life. For the socioeconomic status of a family, adolescents who are raised by low-educated parents or grow up in low-income families are more likely to develop an addiction to social media. The meaning of the research is to figure out the importance of family in helping improve social media addiction for their children. It aims to raise the awareness of parents, healthcare providers, and society about this issue and draw their attention to family factors when they develop interventions and strategies. The association between family factors and social media addiction is still an emerging area, and there are limited studies directly investigating its relationship among adolescents. In future studies, family determinants and potential interventions are suggested to be taken into

account while studying adolescents' social media addiction.

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