Social Media and Teenagers: A Narrative Review in the School Context

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Abstract. With the progression of technological era, the development of globalized software become attractive to the majority. In a word, no one could really live without their technological products. This paper examines the relationship between social media and teenagers by analyzing the four implications social media have on teens, namely in-school behaviors, cyberbully, and privacy disclosure. The significance of this paper is the uniqueness in perspective. Majority research on social media and teenagers' relationship highlights local problems, yet not too many study enters into the impacts of social media from worldwide viewpoint. Applicable solutions have also been raised corresponding to each impacts social media has on teens, which are setup of compulsory time control on software use to avoid addiction, create legislations on social network violence to fight against cyberbullying, and be cautious on sharing personal information in the account to prevent privacy leaking.

Keywords: Social Media · Teenagers · Cyberbully · Cyber Addiction · Mental Health

1 Introduction

As an era with fast technological development comes, many daily life issues turned simper. Among all, communication is one of the most significant one that transformed from fundamental methods to more advanced way-via the internet. In another word, this is the start of social media and social platforms. The problem is, the initiative of building online platforms was to convenient people for long-distant communications, yet more drawbacks begin to emerge as the functions of the platform evolves. According to the journal article *Commanding the Trend: Social Media as Information Warfare* written by *Jarred*, he suggested that there should be no doubt that social media is used as a warfare tool in the modern society. The way social media functions may influence netizens' beliefs, social behaviors, or more extremely, diminishing their trust on the government [1].

Take Facebook as an example, Data collected up to 2012 suggests that it had over 845 million users, which is even more than the entire population of Europe. With all the usage time combined, 9.7 billion minutes are spent globally. To conclude, as one of the earliest developed social networks, since its formation of in February 2004, it has always

been an astonishing software in creating a massive unique domain for the presence of social interactions in daily life. With the innovative leads of such special social trend, more social media got established respectively [2].

Though empirical researchers have already studied how social media impacts most adults' life, most of the study lacks variations. To be more specific, a review paper on *how social media impacts teenagers* is needed from a global perspective instead of only targeting at a particular region. Also, not much teenager-specific content has not been found in relation to the use of social media. Therefore, to fill the gap, the author of this paper will give constructive suggestions on the reducing the negative impacts of social media from a global perspective, and real impact cases will be included from different regions in the world. To shift the focus from adults onto teenagers, by viewing general studies on impacts of social media combined with real life cases that happened on teenagers, the author will make evidentiary analysis and argument.

2   What Is Social Media

Social media is generally considered a platform in-between the traditional broadcast and private dyadic communication. Through these platforms, a specific group size is set and a degree of privacy is promised. According to the book *How the World Changed Social Media*, Danah Boyd was the pioneer in the field of social media. He once stated that "the initial social networking sites in the US were places where people could actively network to find 'friends of friend's or, as in sites such as Friends Reunited, to reconnect with friends". To sum up the idea, social media is a the transformation of social networking sites. At the same time, Boyd also characterized social media. Networked publics possesses four main affordances, namely persistence, visibility, spread ability and searchability. The world of social media is abstract, however. Things often go against each other, and everything is rapidly new then quickly outdated. Prior to the recent developed social platforms, two major communication methods took place initially, namely the broadcast media and the private media. The broadcast such as television, radio or newspapers spread the information of the world or local events to the public in large scale, and it has no direct control over those that makes up the audiences. For private media platform, also known as the "dyadic" communication, it is defined as the intimate way of exchange of idea among familiar friends or relatives, and telephone is a perfect example. People for most of the time communicate face to face, but it is very rare that an interaction between groups would happen [3].

To trace the history of social media, it begins in Korea with the founding of Cyworld. Launched in 1999, the platform soon became the most effectively and popular social method among youth of a large population. 6 years later, almost all youth in Korea started to use Cyworld. Cyworld owns the trait of functioning the friendship as series of concentric groups, and that was similar to the way other social media systems originally operated in Korea. However, Facebook largely occupies Korea several years later, and have replaced the role of Cyworld. Yet this barely have anything to do with neither the functions nor the cultural alignment, but simply to be the desire of follow up an international trend. Hence, social media cannot simply be given with a definition since variety of perspectives have to be taken into consideration.

3 The Impact of Social Media

Though social media seems to have lots of beneficials, it does, however, have negative influence on the other hand. Among all the impacts, this paragraph will particularly examine on how teenagers can be influenced by social media on their mental health, how it causes verbal violence online, and how it leads to privacy disclosure.

3.1 Mental Health and Academic Performance of Teens at School

In recent years, the use of technology rises dramatically on school campuses. The primary intention for applying digital products was for research and learning. However, as observed by professors and school teachers, students start to apply internet in a different way. According to Chou, he observed that in a dorm room of four students, everyone is busy communicating with friends or strangers online. Teachers also noticed that there is a distinct reduction of presence of students in morning classes. Other than that, school administrators have also found that a relationship between the poor academic performance and the addiction on social media. According to Young's study, he concludes that though the internet itself may not be attractive, certain applications occur to fill that gap. MUD games, Internet relay chat, and chat rooms are the most popular platform that leads to the addictive behavior of the majority. Based on research done by Brenner, the result suggests that 80%, which is over 600 teens responded that reflected the problem caused by over-use of social media, which includes failure in time-management, lack of sleeping time, or skipping meals. Furthermore, in the same study, 13% of students stated that the use of social media has largely impacted their academic or professional performance, and social lives. Among the 13% respondents, 2% indicates that internet brings a negative influence on them [4]. These are only self-accessing tasks, but clearly large number of teens have already noticed the problem themselves. Another astounding study conducted by a group of psychiatrists in 2018 suggests that teenagers that aged between 14 to 17 who uses social media for more than 7 h a day is twice as likely to get depression clinic. It is indicated that continuous overload of content from social media may turn on the brain's nerve to the mode of "flight-or-flight". In turn, ADHD and depression can be the resulted disorders [5]. Once the addition turned into a social norm, the process of rehabilitation will be as hard as eradicate drug dependency. For instance A 15-year-old ballerina shared a self-harm photo on the self-created online alter ego-a strong cocaine-taker-because she is so desperate to be loved. She also constantly visit online news that relate to suicides. The online world has a huge attraction to the girl, and this fantasy got confronted by her mother one day. She responded that over 18,000 netizens love her internet figuration, and her mother does not understand it, and prohibited her use technologies for a moment. She was depressed and upset for living without her technological devices. After the day she argued with her mother, she left home with nothing, and got hit by a train the next day when she was found. This was a real event that happened on October 12, 2012, at West Hampstead, NW London, at the St. Pancras Station [6]. Everyone ought to seek for the beauty of the natural world, because putting too much expectation on strangers only brings limited values to personal growth.

3.2 Cyberbully

The initial intention of building social media platforms is to create a peaceful and entertaining passageway for people to reach more information and to communicate in a more convenient way. However, some local events such as the 911 attack, or the 2011 Japan Earthquake, can often soon ferment into mega-stories that attract attentions globally. Through social media, it is not rare that a minor issue can soon trigger the extensive amount of publication concerns far more beyond the truth [7]. Every individual holds their own perspective, and thus when contradictory ideas come together, especially under the condition that an individual owns a thought that is largely different than the way others view the issue, violence takes place [8]. Most of the sociologists categorize cyberbullying into the domain of criminology and deviance. The forms of violence such as those that are illegal, socially deviant, publicly denounced, or having relations to social conflicts is a frequently cluster of research lately, just as how censoriously the cyberbullying cases are being viewed as one of the most severe social issues nowadays. Correlational studies found a relationship named The Chicken-or-Egg Dilemma. That is, if aggression can be the result of media violence, then the possibility of the aggression the children perform will be higher when they expose to media violence [9]. According to a news of Malaysia, a 16-year-old girl posted a poll on Instagram to ask strangers online to share their opinion on whether she should end her life, anonymously. The result was in deed shocking-69% of the responders voted yes. She committed to suicide right after seeing the responses. This case was suggested to be an indirect homicide, and those who voted that she should die could be guilty of abetting suicide. A serious discussion have been hold between lawyers and youth mental health ministers, and the majority believed that the encouragement of netizens might have had a potential influence on taking her life. It seems that many teenagers nowadays strongly heed on the advice of netizens, and that they really care every voice though they do not know who the person is behind the screen [10]. Take another event published by China Daily as an example. In the most recent 2022 Winter Olympic, Eileen Gu and Zhu Yi were both raised up in the United States, but since Gu won the golden medal in female's freestyle skiing big air competition, everyone expressed their admirations and shared their praising words. However, Zhu was targeted by the critics due to her mistakes in the females' singles short program. The aftermath of this event turned out to be that Zhu kept herself silent for a quite long period of time, feeling depressed. Zhu is only 19, still too young to bare all the exaggerated voices from the keyboard warriors, and that anyone's success shall never be determined by one single chance alone [11].

The problem of cyberbully is far more serious than the stories above. For those perpetrators, they pick up the keyboard in front of them and attack random people they do not fully know about. But the ironic part is that they place themselves onto the role of supreme god, and that they believe they have the right to judge others because they are standing on top of morality.

3.3 Privacy Disclosure

Today, most of the social communication take place digitally, thus the concept of privacy - an old idea-got raised up once again. Various definition were identified by previous

research, but the basic elements in the meaning of each definition shares similar trait-individual rights. According to France and Robert, it mainly refers to human right, but with much more detailed branches involved. Schoeman, on the other hand, believes that the term *privacy* should be judged based on the criteria of legal and the ethicalness of individual behaviors [12]. There are four dimensions of privacy, namely personal privacy, personal behavior privacy, personal data privacy, and personal communication privacy. Among all, personal data and communication privacy is the most essential part users care when being online, thus the combination of these two are named *information privacy*. To conclude the various definitions of privacy, in short, is the form of control over intentional secondary use of one's private information [13]. To make it less abstract, one of the typical examples could be by stalking profile and newsfeed information on one's Facebook account, it gives the chance for potential victims to determine whether the civility is at home or on a vacation, in turn makes the hijack easier for the criminals. The serious part is, privacy is not only limited to individual-governmental, or cooperation secret data are also considered to be privacy. Embraer, one of the Brazilian plane manufacture cooperation stated data attributed to the company got hacked and stolen. According to the staff, the data of the hacking was identified to be on Nov. 25th, 2020, and only a single company archive was accessed by the criminal. The aftermath of this event, fortunate enough, was only temporary and not too serious, but its internal system was isolated and negatively affected in the process of containing the attack [14]. Fortunate enough, governments have noticed the issue. More awareness have been raised in the modern society. In the United States, legislative protection for individual privacy has been publicly announced in the recent years. Protection such as unauthorized break-ins and accessing electronic systems illegally are all great supportive examples [15].

4 Possible Solutions to the Problems

Corresponding to each highlighted impacts listed above, three feasible solutions are raised to avoid the cyber issues.

4.1 Take Compulsive Time Control on Teens' Social Media Use

In comparison to other tasks, improving academic scores and maintaining physical health are the priorities for teenagers. However, even if oneself strongly desire to cut down the total use of time, addiction to social media cannot be removed easily. Therefore, the trait of self-consciousness is rarely detected on most of the teenagers, and thus a compulsory command must be set from the terminal. The control take place from two aspects—both physical and spiritual.

Physical actions should be taken. Instead of trusting the trait of conscientious, parents should allot a specific hour a day for their kids' use of certain application by connecting the ID of two phones together. By setting a passcode, the user of the technology will be immediately banned to use the software as soon as the time limit is reached by each day.

By spiritual it means, psychological guidance should take place accompanied with the physical actions. Linking back to the previous real-life situation stated in paragraph 3.1, which is the girl committed to suicide after she got limited to use social platform.

To avoid the happening of these situations, parents have to pay extra attention on the emotional change of the teenagers, especially that they are under the period of puberty, and that their mood is constantly changing. For this reason, the purpose of communicating calmly with teens for parents is to make sure that they do not overreact to the limits on their freedom.

4.2 Regulate the Behaviours of the Teen Netizens from Legislative and Administrative Level

Firstly, the administrators should monopolize all possible sensitive contents that might mislead teens to the wrong path. The founder of different social platform is strongly urged to hold onto the responsibility to ensure that their users feel safe and supported, especially for teenagers that are at an immature age. It is not hard for administrators to program the system to make it spot specific keywords such as *suicide*. Once series of related words got locked by the administrator, all of the related posts will be blocked for teens. The less teenagers view, the more pressure reduction they receive.

At the same time, to solve the problem from its root, create laws that punish the criminals is also a suitable solution. Just like other crime commitments, specific laws should be created to protect digital citizenships, especially the teenagers. Take the example of the girl committed to suicide after reviewing more than 50% people's vote for "agree on dying" stated in 3.2, the government should create sets of law stating that in all situations, both intentionally or randomly, netizens who present potential verbal or bullying behaviors should be considered as a crime that worth to be sent on the court for further judgements. With this threat as the premise, it is firmly believed that no one would keep expressing ruthless words under the comment area in others' posts.

4.3 Pay Attention to Account Settings and Content Sent

Corresponding to the third media impact, which is the violation on privacy information, it is strongly suggested to set the account *private*. Therefore, other than an expert hacker who has a clear target, the majority cannot investigate the information in this account. A request must be sent first, and only can he see personal information after the approval from the account owner. Different applications function differently, and thus turn off the visibility to strangers shall be the first step. Another setting, the access password to the account, is equally important. To avoid the stolen of account, setting up a complex password instead of using simple names is the first defensive wall. At the same time, it is important to know that one's identity will not be utilized if nothing is posted. Once the information gets posted, nothing can be deleted completely without trace [14]. Therefore, it needs to be selective when posting – avoid home address, or inappropriate images of oneself. Once got targeted by rantankerous strangers, the loss of money, or, in a more terrible way, intentional murder might turn out to be the result of privacy-leaking. Hence, that largely enhances the overall accessibility to one's personal information.

5 Conclusion

To highlight the findings, though it must be admitted that social media have brought conveniences between communities, this study concludes that most of the impacts brought

by social media are negatively reflected. Practical events reveals this craziness of the social platform and how it can harm teenagers in various ways. However, if to judge the accuracy of the conclusion, limitations do exist. Since this is a review paper, no direct primary research data were collected and utilized for analysis. In another word, no experiments were conducted, thus all the qualitative and qualitative numerical data are referenced using secondary sources. Therefore, for future research project, more empirical establishment on relevant experiment designs is expected in order to increase the accuracy of the study.

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