

The role of instagram on adolescent development



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Introduction

Children and adolescents of today have been more immersed in both new forms as well as traditional forms of media than ever before. Research on traditional media, such as television, radio, and social media have identified health concerns and negative outcomes that correlate with the duration and content of viewing. Over the past decade, the use of digital media, including interactive and social media, has grown, and research evidence suggests that these newer media offer both benefits and risks to the health of children and teenagers. Much of the existing research on media has focused on its effects to the consumer. Different theories indicated by Jeffrey Arnett explain the different outcomes of media on adolescents. The cultivation theory indicates that media influences a person's mindset and molds perception of the world at large. The social learning theory dictates that consumers will often utilize social media figures as role models, and emulate behaviors that are glorified by viewers. Finally, the uses and gratifications approach says that different people will develop and make different choices in relation to which media they view and participate in, and their response will be unique to their own thoughts and feelings (Arnett, 2012). All in all, social media sites are not necessarily good or bad, rather their effects lie in how they are being used. This idea can be seen through Jeffrey Arnett's argument that, " the uses and gratifications approach considers the ' gratifications or satisfactions' that the adolescents receive from the media they choose to consume" (2012, p. 340). Generally, media overall is viewed as having potentially negative effects on adolescents.

Media Use in Adolescents

<https://assignbuster.com/the-role-of-instagram-on-adolescent-development/>

Research done on the effects of media on children often reflect a negative correlation between media use and children, especially with the increase in usage over the past decade. According to researchers on the effects of digital media on children and adolescents, “ approximately three-quarters of teenagers own a smartphone, 24% of adolescents describe themselves as ‘ constantly connected’ to the Internet and 50% report feeling ‘ addicted’ to their phones (Chassiakos, Radesky, Christakis, Moreno, & Cross, 2016, p. 3). Adolescents spend more time using online media than any other age group, and are the first generation ever to be linked with Internet-based communication as an integral part of their upbringing. That being said, it is clear that media is a huge platform and has an immense influence on the lives of adolescents.

Instagram and Self-Esteem & Mental Health

According to Kara Fox from CNN, “ Instagram is the most detrimental social networking app for young people’s mental health, followed closely by Snapchat” (2017). Instagram, a social media platform designed as a simple and fun way to capture, edit, and share photos, videos, and messages with friends and family, has become much more than that. One negative aspect of Instagram on adolescent development is that it affects the self-esteem of young girls and guys, as many of them are constantly comparing themselves to the images and depictions of other young girls and boys who have often manipulated their images. If we take the social learning theory into consideration, which indicates that social media figures are utilized as role models, it becomes evident that young boys and, girls in particular, will start to emulate behaviors that are glorified by viewers, instead of being their

<https://assignbuster.com/the-role-of-instagram-on-adolescent-development/>

authentic selves (Arnett, 2012). This includes young women posting pictures with less clothes for more likes or young men posting their material things to prove to other young men that they have value. Living a false life would ultimately have a long-term affect an adolescents self-esteem, as the adolescent is not comfortable enough in their own, natural skin, to portray their actual self to the world. Interestingly enough, greater exposure to television and higher rates of social media usage “ resulted in a decrease in self-esteem for both white and black girls and for black boys but resulted in an increase in self-esteem for white boys” (Chassiakos et al., 2016, p. 9).

Research done on adolescents and social determinants on health concluded that “ adolescent health and health-related behaviours are partly a function of factors that lie over and above individual attributes and characteristics, including those related to family, school, community and even nation” (Harris Hyun-soo Kim, 2016, p. 368). Kim argued that heavy Internet use increases the odds of being a repeated victim of online bullying and past research had further linked social media activities, in particular and Internet use more broadly with a host of negative mental health issues such as poor psychological functioning and distress, low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, loneliness and even suicidal ideation (Kim, 2016, 365). Chassiakos et al. have research that supports that idea, arguing that older adolescents who used social media passively by solely viewing content, “ reported declines in well-being and life satisfaction, whereas those who used social media actively by interacting with others and posting content did not experience these declines” (2016, p. 9). Another study found that teenagers who used Instagram to follow strangers and engage in social comparisons had “ higher

depression symptoms, but others who followed friends and engaged in less social comparison had fewer depression symptoms” (2016, p. 10). Each of the studies are in agreeance of the uses and gratifications theory, illustrating that despite usage, the major factor is how the adolescent is using the media. Evidence from all research though, shows an increase in depression and lack of self esteem as the usage of social media increases.

A final point to make on the negative aspects of Instagram are the decline in social or people skills in our adolescents. Adolescents are losing the ability to communicate verbally because of the comfort and easiness of only speaking online. While Instagram is supposed to be used to connect with family and friends, adolescents, once face-to-face, are lacking the ability to fully communicate.

Positive Effects of Instagram

Research indicates that there are also benefits of Instagram on adolescent development. The main argument being, that for adolescents who struggle with verbal communication, they are actually having some form of communication and social life, just online. According to Kim, “ certain kinds of media can actually produce positive or prosocial attitudes among youths and that online socializing, under specified conditions, can be beneficial for them” (2016, p. 365). Away from the concept of developmental issues, Kim argues that benefits include enhanced capacity for (online) socializing, increased learning opportunities and greater access to health-promoting information, among others (2016, p. 365). Contrary to the idea that Instagram causes a lack of self-esteem in some, for others, with the uses and

gratifications theory in mind, Instagram might help their self-esteem, increase awareness, lower feelings of loneliness, and promote mental well-being by increasing adolescent sense of belongingness as well, which can indirectly have a positive impact on the psychological well-being. The use of Instagram may also widen users' social networks, strengthen their social relations and help them channel more social support.

All in all, with the help of research, it is evident that there are both positive and negative effects of Instagram and social media on the lives and development of adolescents. The effects simply are a result of an adolescents uses and gratifications of the social media platform.

References

- Arnett, J. (2012). *Adolescence and emerging adulthood A cultural approach*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Chassiakos, Y., Radesky, J., Christakis, D., Moreno, M. A., & Cross, C. (2016). Children and Adolescents and Digital Media. *Pediatrics*, 138 (5). doi: 10. 1542/peds. 2016-2593
- Fox, K. (2017). Instagram worst app for young people's mental health. Retrieved from <https://www.cnn.com/2017/05/19/health/instagram-worst-social-network-app-young-people-mental-health/index.html?no-st=1556503258>
- Kim, H. H. (2016). The impact of online social networking on adolescent psychological well-being (WB): A population-level analysis of Korean school-aged children. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 22 (3), 364-376. doi: 10. 1080/02673843. 2016. 1197135