

Teens and Technology: The Reality of Social Media

It is apparent when observing teens in public that too much time is spent on electronics and social media. Research shows while there may be minor benefits, overall, the use of technology and specifically, social media, is detrimental to the well-being of most teens.

Numerous studies conducted by CNN bring to light a number of these problems. (Argument against social media and technology with support)

According to the article “Teens Spend a ‘mind-boggling’ 9 Hours a Day Using Media, report says,” written by Kelly Wallace of CNN, teens spend too much time on electronics that are not good for them. This is more time than they spend with their family, at school, or sleeping. In fact, it does not even include time spent on homework.

Tweens, defined as those children aged 8-12, spend six hours, on average, using technology. Surprisingly, the article also says most information these young people learn is found online. The study surveyed 2,600 children aged 8 to 18.

A Stanford study also found children cannot multitask and learn well using this much technology. Gender differences were also noticed. For example, boys tend to utilize more violent games, while girls choose more social options. This leads to less social development. Furthermore, not all families can afford electronics, causing more problems between those who can and cannot purchase the latest technology.

Other interesting facts, according to this study, include teens and tweens prefer television and music to the more recent forms of technology, and the world is becoming a much more mobile world every day. This means the social interactions are happening on electronics more, and less in face-to-face conversations. This could lead to a disturbing lack of empathy in the future.

Furthermore, Suzie East, a reporter for CNN, in her online article, “Teens: This is how social media affects your brain” (2016) lists several ways in which social media is currently affecting the brains of young people. For example, communication with friends is changing due to technology. According to a UCLA study, there are four other changes that affect a teen’s brain.

The first change is in how teen brains respond to “likes” on social media. Because they may become addicted to “likes,” teens are more likely to use social media even more. This is not a good thing, since teens are also influenced by their peers. The second point made in this study says kids will like what is popular, not always what is best for them, leading to further problems.

Another change is in how teens learned about social interactions face-to-face in the past, and are now relying on social media to determine what their peers are feeling. This is not as effective, since teens only see a reaction, for example, a “like,” a “tweet,” a “share,” an emoji, etc., and they do not have the physical interaction.

The final change is in whether or not social media has a bad influence on brain development. For example, the study shows while teens may not be able to read expressions as well, perhaps their brains are adapting. The new skill is knowing and keeping track of what is going on in a group, simultaneously. This is not a good or bad skill, just a different one. The question remains, as to whether it will stay positive in the future.

Lastly, CNN reporter Chuck Hadad’s article, “Why some 13-year-olds check social media 100 times a day,” explains how some teens feel technology is an everyday necessity. #Being13, a study of eighth graders and their social media use, found these teens are addicted to social media caused by the anxiety of not knowing what is going on when they are not connected. 61% of the participants were checking for likes and comments, 36% were checking in

on friends, and 21% were checking for mean posts; this shows why teens are compulsively checking social media.

The study, #Being13, analyzed 150,000 posts on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. They found some teens not only follow their friends, but also their enemies. They also found an astonishing amount of adult content on their posts. The vast majority of the participants' parents had no idea it was that bad. The study found social media abuse and the anxiety it causes can be prevented by parent supervision. Overall, while the study showed there are positive influences on social media, there are also many negative.

Obviously, teens are not going to stop using technology or social media. Viewing adult content, lacking social interaction, empathy, and the ability to read common facial expressions is alarming considering the number of young people involved. If something does not occur, and quickly, to stem the corruption online, one can only imagine the damaging effects this young generation will continue to suffer.