

GHAZANFAR HUSSAIN

STUDENT NUMBER 2513364

MODULE LCHS4010

ALICE CLAYTON

ESSAY OF IMPACT OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an essential part of adolescents' daily lives influencing the way they communicate learn and develop relationships. Popular platforms such as Instagram ,TikTok , snapchat , and Facebook are opportunities for self-expression social interaction and access to information. Despite these benefits increasing evidence suggests that excessive social media use may have significant effects on adolescent mental health. Research has found that prolonged use of social media is associated with higher levels of anxiety depression, stress, poor sleep quality, low self – esteem and body image concerns. Adolescents are particularly vulnerable because they are undergoing important emotional cognitive and social development. Making them more susceptible to the negative effects of cyberbullying social comparison and online peer pressure. However, studies also indicate that social media can have positive outcomes by providing emotional support, promoting mental health awareness and helping young people maintain social connections. These contrasting finding suggest that the impact of social media depends on factors such as the frequency and purpose of use. The type of online interaction and individual resilience therefore this research examines the impact of social media on adolescent mental health by reviewing both its positive and negative effects and to provide evidence-based recommendation for promoting healthy social media use among adolescents.

THEORY

Erik Erikson psychosocial theory is particularly interesting when applied to adolescence because this stage is centred on the crisis of identity versus role confusion according to Erikson adolescents are trying to discover who they are what they believe and how they fit into society. Erikson, 1968). This is a complex period of the lifespan and one arguably more challenging in contemporary environments as adolescents deal with various personal and educational pressures, different from those experienced by previous generations During this period young people seek acceptance from their peers while developing their own values and sense of self. This makes adolescence a crucial stage for understanding behaviours and influence including the widespread use of social media. Erikson s theory helps explain the popularity of social media because these platforms provide adolescents with opportunities to explore and express their identities. Teenagers can share photos and opinions, hobbies and achievements while

receiving immediate feedback through likes and comments and followers. This feedback can strengthen self-confidence and help them feel accepted by their peer groups supporting healthy identity developments. Social media can also connect young people with supportive communities particularly those who may feel isolated due to shared interests' cultural backgrounds or personal experiences. In this way social media can contribute positively to adolescents and social development and sense of belonging. However, Erikson's theory also highlights the potential risks of social media and mental health because adolescents are highly influenced by people approval, they may become overly dependent on online validation. Constant comparison with carefully edited images and seemingly perfect lifestyles can lead to low self-esteem, body dissatisfaction, anxiety and depression. Fear of missing out (FOMO), cyberbullying and pressure to maintain a certain online image may also interfere with healthy identity formation leaving some teenagers feeling confused or inadequate. Instead of developing a stable sense of self based on personal values, they may shape sense of self based on personal values they may shape their identity around the expectations and approval of others. Study of a case illustrates a experience of a teenager girl called Emma, a fictional 15 year old student sharing artwork on social media and initially receives positive comments that encourage her creativity and increase her confidence over time however she becomes preoccupied with the number of likes and followers she receives she starts comparing herself to influencers and classmates, deletes posts that receive fewer likes and spends several hours each day checking her notification as her result her self-esteem declines her anxiety increases and her school performance begins to suffer and she doesn't focus where she is falling behind which can bring mental health issues towards her studies. With support from her parents and school counsellor Emma reduces her screen time, focuses on offline friendships and hobbies and gradually develops greater confidence based on her own interests rather than online approvals. Erikson's psychosocial theory provides a useful framework for understanding both the benefits and risks of social media can support identity development and social connection while also showing how excessive reliance on online validation may negatively affect teenagers' mental health and identity formation. How teenagers develop their identity vs role confusion. Social media has a media influence on this progress as teenagers use online platforms to express themselves, compare themselves with others and seek approval through likes, comments, followers. The theory helps explain how this experience can shape self-esteem, confidence and identity developments. However, the theory has some limitations. Erikson developed his theory before the existence of social media, so it does not consider online interaction, cyberbullying or digital identities. It's also assuming that development follows fixed stages whereas identity development may vary across cultures and individual experience. Despite these limitations, Erikson's theory remains useful because it provided a strong framework for understanding how social media

can positively and negatively affect teenagers' identity formation and psychosocial development.

Theory2

John Bowlby Attachment theory explains that early relationships with caregivers influence an individual emotional development self-esteem and ability to form relationships throughout life (1988) according to Bowlby individuals with secure attachments are more likely to develop confidence resilience and healthy social relationships. Although the theory was originally developed to explain early childhood attachments, it is also relevant to adolescence because teenagers continue to seek emotional support belonging and secure relationships in today's digital age social media can provide opportunities for adolescents to strengthen social connection access emotional support and improve their mental health when used appropriately. I have chosen Bowlby attachment theory as it helps explain why relationships and social connections are essential during adolescence teenagers experience significant emotional psychological and social changes as they develop their identity and independence. During this stage friendships become increasingly important and social media provides an additional platform where these relationships can be maintained. According to Bowlby (1988) secure relationships provide a safe base that allows individuals to explore the world while feeling emotionally supported. Social media can extend this safe connectedness with friends, family members and supportive online communities particularly when face-to-face interaction is limited. One important benefit of social media is that it can reduce feelings of loneliness and social isolation adolescents who struggle to make friends at school or who live far from home may use social media to communicate regularly with trusted people. These online interactions can strengthen existing friendships and help young people feel valued and understood. Research suggests that positive social media use can increase social support and improve emotional wellbeing when interactions are meaningful rather than passive (Odgers and Jensen 2020). This supports Bowlby's view that supportive relationships contribute to emotional security and health development. Social media can also improve teenagers' mental health by increasing access to mental health information and friends' support. Many organisations and support groups use social media platforms to share anxiety depression and other mental health challenges. Adolescents may feel more comfortable seeking help online before talking to a parent, teacher or healthcare professional. Online communities can provide encouragement reduce stigma and reassure young people that they are not alone in their experiences. These supportive interactions can strengthen resilience and promote positive coping strategies which are consistent with the emotional security described in Bowlby's theory. Furthermore, social media allows teenagers to express themselves creatively and build their identity. During adolescence developing a sense of identity is an important developmental task through sharing interests and hobbies, artwork or achievements Young people can

receive positive feedback that enhances self-esteem and confidence. Bowlby's theory suggests that secure relationships encourage exploration and personal growth positive online communities can provide acceptance and encouragement that support healthy identity development particularly for adolescents who may not receive sufficient support in their offline environment. However, it is important to recognise that these benefits depend on how social media is used. Excessive use cyberbullying or constant comparison with others. May negatively affect mental health Bowlby theory reminds us that quality of relationships matters more than the number of online connections. Therefore, teenagers benefit most when social media is used to strengthen genuine supportive relationship rather seeking validation through likes and followers

. In conclusion Bowlby attachments theory provides a useful framework for understanding how social media can positively influence adolescent mental health. The theory emphasises the importance of secure relationships emotional support and belonging to all which can be strengthen through positive online interaction. I chose this theory because its explain why meaningful social connections remain essential during adolescence and how is social media when used responsibly can enhance wellbeing by reducing loneliness increasing access to support and promote healthy identity developments. Although there are risks associated with social media, balanced and positive use can contribute to adolescents' emotional security and overall mental health. Erikson psychosocial theory explains that adolescence is the stage of identity versus role confusion when young people are developing their sense of self and personal identity it can also increase social comparison fear of missing out (FOMO) cyberbullying and pressure to present an idealised image.

Reference

Bowlby,J (1988) A Secure Base parent –child Attachment and healthy Human Development .london Routledge

Odgers,C.L and Jenson,M.R.(2020) Annual Research Review Adolescent. Mental health in the digital age facts,fears,and future directions, journal of child psychology and psychiatry ,61(3),pp 336-348

Orben,A,Meier,A,Dalgleish,T&Blakemore,S.J(2024) Mechanisms social media to adolescent mental health vulnerability Nature Reviews Psychology3 407-423

Erikson ,E.H,(1968) identity youth and crisis new york W. WW Norton &company

Twenge J.M Martin G.N and Campbell W.K (2018) Decreases in psychological development being among America adolescents after 2011 and increased screen time 18(6) pp 765-780

Keles,B,McCrae,N and Grealish,A (2020) A systematic review the influence of social media on depression,anxiety and psychological distress in adolescents international journal of adolescence and youth 25(1)pp79-93