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MODULE: PSYCHOLOGY IN HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE
MODULE CODE: LCHS4010
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INTRODUCTION

Practitioners need to be able to assess risk, and social media may be a new component to consider. Numerous research on the effects of social media has been carried out, and it has been suggested that extended usage of websites like Facebook may be connected to harmful signs and symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression. Adolescence is a unique and significant period in a person's life. Furthermore, it's critical to maintain social and emotional development throughout this time because risk factors including family problems, bullying, and social isolation are common. Many aspects of teenage lives have been impacted by the development of digital technology. Teenagers' usage of social media is one of their most noticeable traits these days. These days, teens routinely make offensive comments on social media.

Trolling on these platforms focuses on body shaming, individual abilities, language, and lifestyle, among other things. The effects that result from trolling might cause anxiety, depressive symptoms, feelings of isolation, and suicidal thoughts. Privacy concerns and cyberbullying on schooling and mental health are all risks associated with this population's usage of social media. Large-scale use of cell phones and other media by young people causes chronic sleep deprivation, which is detrimental to cognitive function, academic achievement, and socio-emotional functioning. Youths who use smartphones and social media are more likely to experience mental distress, engage in self-harming activities, and consider suicide, according to findings from many cross-sectional, longitudinal, and empirical studies. (Khalaf A M, Alubied A A, Khalaf A M, et al.)

MAIN BODY

Childhood experiences shape an adult's personality, according to Freud's theory of psychosexual stages of development. While Freud's theories were psychoanalytic, his and his adherents' theories are referred to as psychodynamic. The concept Sigmund Freud are the source of both ideologies. The original notion of the unconscious mind is psychoanalytic theory, which holds that the unconscious mind is a potent force that shapes our feelings, ideas, and actions. Although most psychodynamic theories concur that the unconscious mind plays a significant influence in human action, they may disagree on how it develops. (Freud, Sigmund).

Erikson's theory has been used in psychology education, therapy, and other professions, and it has had a significant impact on our understanding of human development. It's crucial to remember that people might not always adhere to these phases in a straight line and that each stage's time resolution may differ. Like any psychological theory, Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory includes advantages and disadvantages. Erikson's theory approaches development holistically by taking social and biological influences into account. It recognises the interplay between personal growth and the social and cultural environment. Erikson placed a strong emphasis on how social and cultural elements affect development. This recognises how a person's identity and life experiences are shaped by their social surroundings. Teenagers investigate and form their identities.

The covid-19 pandemic drastically increased dependence on digital platforms for school children as everything shut down, and the only social life or interaction was online. For Generation Z, devices were the only means of education and interaction. Their general development and mental health have been significantly impacted by this prolonged and early media exposure. Social media is the new platform for sharing, expressing oneself, communicating, and forming friendships even though it offers learning and connectivity. It serves as a trigger for teenage pressure to fit in, loneliness, and device addiction.

On the other hand, cyberbullying and unreliable, dangerous, and occasionally abusive online interactions are encouraged. Negative factors or emotional reliance on a single user can lead to self-harm and irreversible low self-esteem. Lack of focus, hyperactivity, withdrawal symptoms, and poor sleep schedule management are among consequences of increased gadget and phone screen time, which also has an impact on eye and physical health. There are no denying social media's negative effects on mental health and general wellbeing. According to recent data from the World Health Organization, one in seven youngsters between the ages of 10 and 19 are impacted, accounting for 15% of the global disease burden. This indicates that teenagers' mental health has significantly declined over the past ten years. Due to a lack of screening and awareness among parents and schools, many young people are unidentified and ostracised.

As social media grows in popularity, teenagers are becoming influencers and becoming caught up in a never-ending cycle of likes, dislikes, shares, and followers. If they don't get the expected response from their followers, it can be stressful and lead to the development of anxiety and depression. (Laroia J, Dua G. March 18, 2026). According to the paper, problematic social media use is a behavioural pattern marked by symptoms like addiction. These include being unable to manage social media use, going through withdrawal while not using it, putting social media ahead of other activities, and dealing with the negative effects of excessive use in day-to-day life. (WHO)

Another growing problem is the addictive nature of social media platforms. With features like notifications, endless scrolling, and personalised where many social media platforms are built to maximise user engagement. Due to their developing brains, adolescents may be especially vulnerable to the dopamine-driven pleasures of social media, which could result in overuse. Social comparison and self-esteem: The problem of social comparison is one of the main issues with social media and teenage mental health. Social media sites are replete with carefully chosen messages and photos that can give an inaccurate impression of life. Teenagers who are still forming their sense of self may compare themselves to these idealised portrayals and feel inferior as a result. But social media's attractive aspects can also be harmful to one's mental health. Teenagers who spend more time online may be more susceptible to unfavourable social comparisons, cyberbullying, and behaviours like addiction. Anxiety, depression, and other mental health problems can result from the ongoing pressure to project an idealised version of oneself. (Ramajaram, Govindaraj 24.12.2024)

Higher levels of social media use between the ages of 12 and 18 were linked to slight but discernible increases in mental health issues a year later, according to a ten-year study conducted by the Murdoch Children's Institute. (MCRI) This finding highlights the need for regulations that limit excessive screen time. According to Dr. Nandi Vijayakumar of MCRI and Deakin University, the results provided much-needed understanding of the possible effects of social media on young people's mental health, especially in the early adolescent years. Nearly 1,200 youngsters in Melbourne between the ages of 9 and 19 who took part in the Child to Adult Transition Study (CATS) were tracked over the course of the longitudinal study. The study collected annual data, before Australia's age restrictions, on social media use and mental health outcomes including depression, anxiety, well – being and self-harm. (Sadie Harley, June 11, 2026).

According to a study published in the Medical Journal of Australia, teenagers who used social media for at least two hours a day were more likely than those who used these platforms for less than an hour a day to experience high depressive symptoms and poor well-being at the subsequent annual assessment. Girls between the ages of 12 and 13 showed the biggest impact on mental health. "The impact of social media on teenage mental health has sparked global policy and community discussions and led to Australia's first social media law," she stated. "Despite all of this, there hasn't been much solid evidence of population-level impacts, which makes our findings especially important" (Google Scholar).

CONCLUSION:

Although research indicates that using digital technology won't hurt the typical child, there are still circumstances in which it might. In this study, we found a link between teenage sadness and social media use. Longitudinal studies are necessary because most research is cross-sectional. Social media has a big impact on young people's personal and social lives. Professional associations advise parents, educators, and institutions based on conflicting and insufficient information about youth and digital technology. Policies limiting teen access to new technology may be ineffectual if they are required to foster social contact or create digital and relational (digitally mediated) skills for expanding economies. Further research is required before we can make firm recommendations for parents, educators, or organisations regarding the effects of social media on mental health. It is essential for young people's health to reach them when they are in need and when help is needed. Teenagers' wellbeing may be enhanced by the availability of a variety of friendships and services. (Alibied A, Khalaf A M, Khalaf A M, et al.)

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