
Negative Effect Of Social Media On Identity In Adolescents

In the last few decades technology has been improving dramatically, from the old clunky plastic computers with super slow internet service and limited information on the web and basic games such as pong, to today's super-fast constantly updating smartphones, watches, laptops, desktops, home devices, and much more all with more power than some of the first space shuttles. Technology is not only getting better, it is also becoming a huge part in our everyday lives, making our lives easier and more efficient. The new generation of children growing up also grows up with the wave of innovative new technology, specifically social media, affecting their identities. Specifically identity of one's self-image and how others view an individual. Social media has a growing effect on young people's identity due to them reflecting off their own accounts too seriously, cyber bullying/comparisons, and altered/filtered photos, all slowly changing our youth's mind and their perception of the way they see their own and others identity.

Online identities are a recent concept, essentially describing and showing who you are for the world to see online. However this common practice has become more important to people over time due to it being a legitimate way for others to see who you are. Unfortunately it is very difficult to depict who you are accurately online resulting in an inaccurate depiction of oneself out for all to see. In Michelle Jana Chan's Identity in a Virtual World, Chan states, "You might create a character and enjoy the autonomy of it at first, but that character then becomes a bigger part of your life". This example essentially helps convey that online profiles become an actual depiction of who a person actually is to some people, which skews how they see people in the future and in real life. When you make an online profile, it becomes a bigger part of your life later on, reflecting your identity off of your own profile, creating a false self-image in the future.

Also since the wave of social media, filters on programs such as Instagram and Snapchat allow users who photograph themselves to add this feature basically adding colors, lights, and other animations making your skin more clear, reducing the amount of fat on your face and chin, and even covering up blemishes. Chris Shearer in his article Filters and photo manipulation on social media sites are creating a generation of deluded adolescents, explains, "Young people are constantly objectifying themselves in the name of public perception, but has society caused this or is it seemingly a revolution caused by the rise of social media? Well, 67 per cent of women told that recent survey they worry about their appearance, more often than finances, relationships, or even professional success". According to Shearer, younger adults, (mostly women) prioritize their looks, and physical appearance more than other very important aspects and responsibilities in life, making social media filters an easy choice when posting a photo or

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video online. Although it could be argued that this improves the confidence of the people who use them and promotes people to be more social, this is only a short term solution, and a long-term disaster in terms of the social identity. The reason for this is because people who do this slowly believe these filtered photos are legitimately what they look like. On top of this people who see others filtered photos could make comparisons to themselves, losing self-esteem/worth as a byproduct of this. Not only does this make others feel worse, this also raises the question mentally when trying to determine if you are interested or even know the person with a filter or edit photo, forming distrust and confusion when online.

In terms of how significantly social media even affects the adolescent mind, author Angelea Barnes and Christine Blaired in the article, *The Effects of Social Media on Children Stated*, "Social media can affect the mental health of teens. The level of effect, according to research, seems to go up as teens' use goes up. Their level of contentment can decrease, and their likelihood of getting into trouble or being depressed can increase. Also, teens who use Facebook tend to be more narcissistic, antisocial, and aggressive". According to this passage, social media and all its content negatively affects teenagers by them being online and either being cyber bullied, or feeling bad by comparing themselves to other people online who could even be fake, leading to a mentality full of negativity. Another reason why social media is bad is because Caroline Miller, in her article *Does Social Media Cause Depression*, discusses studies done showing the correlation of social media and kids mental health issues. Miller stated, "A 2017 study of over half a million eighth through 12th graders found that the number exhibiting high levels of depressive symptoms increased by 33 percent between 2010 and 2015. In the same period, the suicide rate for girls in that age group increased by 65 percent." This quote explains how the more girls use social media also shows signs of being less happy overall. The main cause of this goes back to the comparisons and amount of likes people see online. Everyone wants to fit in and seem popular, and it's a common practice to try and have the most fake followers and likes, essentially representing how liked/respected you are. However many kids get too deep into this kind of activity and begin to fixate on the way they are presented online for others to see. This is very unhealthy, mostly insecure boys and girls will tend to change their feeds, or profiles on social media to different content as a way of branding themselves the way they like. Although this seems fine and harmless, most of the time what these kids see are edited photos that look real, which becomes common for them to mimic causing many to stray away from themselves and to create an altered persona online, and for anyone trying to find out who they really are. As a result of many profiles being altered and changed online, in real life adolescents feel more depressed and not as good as others because of the comparison they make online. A continuous trend of this kind of activity would most likely cause people to constantly be focused on their social status online, and in real life which is unhealthy for anyone, especially students increasing their insecurities and sensitivity.

Some may say that social media and online profiles are beneficial because it allows for

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networking and practice communicating. However it is not uncommon for people to make alias accounts or accounts that don't represent who they are at all, sometimes even using other people's photos pictures as their own to trick other people into thinking they are someone else. This is common practice is referred to as "catfishing" most commonly used on dating websites, and other networking sites such as Instagram. In an essay by Daniel Le called Online Dating at its Finest, he explains what catfishing is and how it is implemented online. He also goes into detail what happens when people see these fugazi accounts. In the essay he stated, "Misguided information can lead to the devastation of the significant others feelings. Miscommunication can cause the lack of trust in humanity and creates a tainted environment". This quote conveys that online catfish accounts result in a lack of trust in the online community, and could affect judgment in how we see others online knowing it too could be a fake account as well. This also affects people's identity due to their online account being false to make the user feel better about themselves or to trick others into thinking they are someone else. There has never been such an easy way to deceive others and even oneself before creating a distorted self-identity.

So as you can clearly see, social media is a new byproduct of modern technology that will most likely alter the identity of adolescence by reflecting too seriously off their own account, Filtered photos/photoshop, cyber bullying, and Catfishing. Which would all lead to an alternate self-identity along with minor mental health issues that one wouldn't have if not on social media, creating a new wave of insecure, confused, and sensitive individuals.

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