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How is Social Networking Sites Effecting Teen's Social and Emotional Development: A Systemic Review

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Development: A Systemic Review

by

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Abstract

Teenagers are today's most profuse users of social networking sites (SNS).

Contemporary youth are growing up in a cultural setting in which many aspects of their

lives will be mediated by social media and many of their experiences and opportunities

will be shaped by their engagement with SNS. Subsequently, questions and controversies

emerge about the effects SNS have on adolescent development due to how embedded

their lives are in social media. A systematic review of fifteen articles was used in

gathering information on the effects of SNS on adolescents' social and emotional

development. The studies gathered concluded that there are both risks and benefits to

teenager's social and emotional development when it comes to the use of SNS.

Keywords: teens, adolescents, social media, networking sites, identity,

development, social development, emotional development

Introduction

Where passing notes, meeting at the local burger joints, and calling our friends via a landline used to exist, now cell phones, apps, and social networking sites control our teen's days and lives. Teens today do not know what a landline telephone is, Facebook and Instagram have taken the place of meeting friends at a burger joint, and text messaging has replaced note passing during class. Bryant et al. (2006) found, through network data collection and analysis study, that there is an increase in teen depression, self-mutilation, dysfunctional families, and promiscuity in today's youth than ever before. What has changed?

A systematic review was completed to gather the effects of social networking sites on teens. One would assume that these social media sites have a huge impact on our teens; because of the way they have inundated their lives to a degree that appears incomprehensible to yesterday's youth.

The current tools of teenage communication go by a peculiar set of names. Wall Posts, Status Updates, Activity Feeds, Thumbs Ups, Profiles are just some of the ways that youth today communicate with one another. Ahn's (2011) qualitative study on the effects of SNS on adolescents' social and academic development stated that these tools are features of social networking sites (SNS), such as Facebook and MySpace. Are these SNS benefiting our teens or are they risking their emotional and social well-being? Ahn (2011) found that there are both benefits and risks to SNS and adolescent use. Adolescents could be at risk as they navigate and experiment with the array of SNS due to their limited capacity for self-regulation and susceptibility to peer pressure (Ahn, 2011). Ahn (2011) also states that SNS could play a significant benefit in teens social

life, stating that SNS is aiding in adolescents' social development. In a quantitative study on online communication and adolescent social ties written by Lee (2009) psychologists have pin-pointed a few issues directly related to this new outbreak of using social media; which include behaviors such as bullying, clique-forming, sexual-experimentation (sexting), and internet addiction. Lee (2009) concluded that although there are severe risks to our media saturated youth there are also beneficial social developments to this media culture. Teens are consistently seeking for their identity and SNS is assisting in teens' search for Identity (Lee, 2009).

There is a long list of these social media Web applications that utilize Web 2.0. The Web 2.0 defines websites that are designed to: (a) rely on the participation of mass groups of users rather than centrally controlled content providers, (b) aggregate and remix content from multiple sources, and (c) more intensely network users and content together (Ahn, 2011). SNS is both a frightening prospect for parents, caregivers, and educators to have youth connected to these global online communities, as well as an intriguing area for social science research. While many remain fearful about safety and effects on the youth of today teenagers are a very unique population of SNS users. They are among the first to have grown up entirely surrounded by communication technologies. Using a systematic approach on this research gives us an idea of what knowledge, about youth and social networking sites, is already out there. Ahn (2011) mentions the importance of ongoing research in this field due to the intriguing networked teens growing up around us.

Adolescent Development as an Important Aspect of SNS Use

The development and consolidation of identity, or a sense of sameness and continuity are two important developmental issues that are emphasized in adolescents. Identity is not given to an individual by society; however, it can be shaped by one's society. In a society saturated in social networking sites and electronic devices, this poses an obstacle for the identity-thirsty adolescent.

Although a person's identity is established in ways that differ from culture to culture, the accomplishment of this developmental task has a common element in all cultures. Erikson (Erikson, 1959) states that in order to acquire a strong and healthy ego-identity the adolescent must receive consistent and meaningful recognition of his/her achievements and accomplishments. Today's social-media-saturated-culture provides ample fuel for teens to get their desired acknowledgements needed to build identity.

Erikson (1959) discusses that, the search for an identity involves the production of a meaningful self-concept in which past, present, and future are linked together. Consequently, the task has become more difficult in a historical period, in which, the past has lost the anchorage of family and community tradition, the present is characterized by social change, and the future has become less predictable. According to Erikson (1959), in a period of rapid social change, the older generation is not able to provide adequate role models in today's social networking world due to their lack of knowledge in SNS. Therefore, Erikson believes that the importance of the peer group cannot be overemphasized. Peers help adolescents find answers to the question "who am I?" as they depend on social feedback, how others feel, and how they react to the individual.

Social networking sites, such as Facebook, Snap Chat, Instagram, Kik, etc. provide teens with a very unique way to carry out Erikson's theory of finding their identity.   Erikson (1959, pg 65) states:

> *Adolescents are sometimes morbidly, often curiously, preoccupied with what they appear to be in the eyes of others as compared with what they feel they are and with the question of how to connect to earlier cultivated roles and skills with the ideal prototypes of the day.*

Social network sites provide just this for our adolescents today.

Finding identity is necessary for adolescents. If one fails in their search for identity, Erikson (1959) believes that the teen may experience self-doubt, role diffusion, and role confusion. These setbacks can stem into even greater risks, such as adolescents falling into depression and even indulging in self-destructive behaviors. Ahn (2011) mentions the failure of teens to develop identity and further concludes that failure to develop identity can lead to teens being morbidly pre-occupied with what others think of them. They may also withdraw and no longer care about themselves and others (Ahn, 2011). Ahn (2011) summarizes that this can lead to ego diffusion, personality confusion and in most severe cases lead to suicide attempts. Forming identity is a major developmental step all teens must achieve, failure to identify their identity can lead to many harmful effects. Now that SNS has taken over teenagers' lives, finding out how SNS can either aide or hinder teens' identity development is crucial for today's research (Ahn, 2011).

In conclusion off Erikson's theory and the present behaviors of adolescents today, the importance of self-identity motivates research to be completed on the obstacles and/or

benefits of our media-saturated environment and the effects on teens' ability to form identity.

Risks and Benefits From SNS Use

From a developmental perspective, adolescents try to establish their identity and self-esteem in their relations with friends. Boyd's (2008) ethnographic study, on the role of networked publics in teenage social life, concluded that teens develop and practice advanced social skills within their peer groups, while being involved in many activities. Boyd (2008) looks at why teens "heart" social network sites in this qualitative study and he concludes that their socialization is a major benefit of these sites and their continual use of social media.   Furthermore, peer relationships are a social context influencing adolescents' achievement of developmental tasks such as: (a) learning to get along with friends of both sexes, (b) accepting ones' physical body and keeping it healthy, (c) becoming more self sufficient, (d) making decisions about marriage and family life, (e) preparing for a job or career, (f) acquiring a set of values to guide behavior, and (f) becoming socially responsible (Boyd, 2008). Boyd (2008) insists that these social tasks are happening alongside the usage of social networking sites in today's generation of youth.   Lee (2009) also mentions similar findings to Boyd (2008) in his studies that say adolescents utilize the potentials of interactive media facilitating connections with social contexts, in order to achieve developmental tasks. The achievement of these developmental tasks also facilitate in youth being able to establish their identity (Lee, 2009).

From their quantitative research study, on Iming (instant messaging), text messaging, and adolescent social networks, Bryant, Sanders-Jackson, and Smallwood

(2006) concludes from their questionnaires that today's youth do not necessarily feel that

using SNS takes time away from their friendships. Conversely, Ahn (2011) concluded

that SNS could affect teens' friendships if used to harass other peers. Bryant et al.

(2006), says that many youth consciously use SNS to influence their peer networks.

Young people's use of technology to communicate with one another is certainly nothing

new; consider the telephone in the 1950s and 1960s. The change we have seen in the past

decade is the difference in the form that communication has taken. New, text-based,

technologies are picking up where phones left off. Bryant et al. (2006), mentions that

email and text messaging and other SNS allow for rapid, asynchronous communication

among many friends all at once. This aids in teens learning to appropriately socialize with

their peers and build on their social development (Bryant et al., 2006). Their research

was based off of network data collection and analysis, which were also integrated with

more traditional questionnaire methodology and statistical analysis study.

Ahn (2011) discusses both the benefits and risks of the many SNS in his

qualitative study on networked teens. Ahn (2011) states that the benefits of SNS for

teens include having socially and communicably enhanced learning opportunities, as well

as the ability to access health information. Some of the risks stated by Ahn (2011)

include being exposed to cyber-bullying, sexting, and Facebook depression. Cyber

bullying is defined as the deliberate use of electronic communication to bully a person,

typically by sending messages of an intimidating or threatening nature Ahn (2011).

Sexting is defined as the act of sending (someone) sexually explicit photographs or

messages via SNS and Facebook depression being deemed a new phenomenon by

researchers is defined as a depression that develops when preteens and teens spend a

great deal of time on social media sites and then begin to exhibit classic symptoms of

depression (Clarke-Pearson, 2011). Clarke-Pearson et al., (2011) Qualitative study on the

impact of social media on our teens and families stated that once "SNS depression" has

set in, the teen may become more at risk for social isolation and turn to risky internet sites

and blogs for "help" that may promote substance abuse, unsafe sexual practices, or

aggressive or self-destructive behaviors (Clarke-Pearson, 2011). Clarke-Pearson et al.,

(2011), mentions that naturally when a person becomes depressed they gravitate towards

unhealthy and somewhat self-destructive behavior, so if a teen experiencing "SNS

depression" they, too, will gravitate towards unhealthy behavior only on the internet.

One of the most common themes across the research of SNS and teens is

socialization and communication. Ahn (2011) mentions socialization being a benefit of

teens' SNS use in light of just staying connected with friends and family. The ability to

share pictures and exchanging ideas and small talk via text messaging, blogs, profiles,

and status updates is the new-age "note passing" meaning that these methods have

become ways to interject their identity (Boyd, 2015). Using SNS may appear non-social

to caregivers and other adults due to the lack of face-to-face contact however this has

become teen's only means of socialization. Teens today are among the first to have

grown up entirely surrounded by SNS; so naturally, we would expect a change in how

teens learn social development skills. If SNS is all teens are using to socialize then, Ahn

(2011) states, SNS must be a key tool in teens expressing their identity.

Social media participation also can offer adolescents deeper benefits that extend

into their view of self, community, and the world including: (a) opportunities for

community engagement through raising money for charity and volunteering for local

events, including political and philanthropic events, (b) enhancement of individual and

collective creativity through development and sharing of artistic and musical endeavors,

(c) growth of ideas from the creation of blogs, podcasts, videos, and gaming sites, (d)

expansion of one's online connection through shared interests to include others from

more diverse backgrounds, and (e) fostering of one's individual identity and unique

social skills (Ahn, 2011).

While some research supports Ahn's (2011) view on SNS being a benefit for

teens' social communication, Lee (2009) would argue that this is true until it expands to

the familial unit. Lee (2009) studies online communication and adolescent social ties in

her quantitative study and suggested that the internet and time spent on SNS weakens

adolescents' existing relationships with families. This happens due to the lack of time

spent with family in the evenings and on weekends. Lee (2009) suggests that teens are

spending their time on SNS instead of face-to-face time with family. This statement

comes with many variables as it does not take into account the rules and knowledge of

parents, nor does it take into consideration the family system already in play; such as,

foster homes, divorce, death of parents, living with other family members, etc. These

variables can play into a teens' time spent on SNS. Lee (2009) focuses on the social

aspects of family life and mentions that although peer-to-peer socialization is mostly

done via SNS family socialization is not and teens today are finding it harder to pull away

from SNS use to interact face-to-face with their family members. Lee (2009) also

discusses the lack of research done on academic and family socialization. SNS use in

teens and its benefits for socialization is seen as a good thing; however, teens are bringing

their SNS use into the classroom and their family times after school (Lee, 2009). Lee

(2009) wonders if teenagers are becoming too dependent on their SNS devices in areas of life that SNS use is seen as tableau.

A quantitative study, on teens, smartphones, and texting, completed by Lenhart (2012) reports that the volume of texting among teens has risen from fifty texts a day in 2009 to sixty texts for the average teen text user. Lenhart (2012) used a few surveys and questionnaires in his study to conclude information on teens' usage of their smartphones. Texting is the dominant daily mode of communication between teens and all those with whom they communicate. Lenhart's (2012) quantitative study, also reports that roughly one in four teens own a smartphone, which gives them access to many different apps that support the SNS. Social Media has become extremely pervasive in the lives of American teens that having a presence on a social network site is almost synonymous with being online (Lenhart, 2012). Ninety-five percent of all teens, ages 12 through17, are now online and eighty percent of those online teens are users of social media sites (Lenhart, et al., 2011). Furthermore, Lenhart (2011) examines the type of experiences that teens are having as they are connected to SNS. In Lenhart's (2011) quantitative research paper teens report their experiences with cyber bullying through surveys and questionnaires. Lenhart (2011) found that positive interactions are happening on SNS more frequently then negative ones reported from teens. Lenhart (2011, pg. 12) states:

> As in other aspects of their lives, teens witness a range of behaviors online. A
> Facebook profile can be the site of a budding romance or the staging ground for
> conflict. Exchanges that begin online can more offline and face-to-face
> conversations that are initiated in person can continue in social media spaces
> where they are then annotated with comments, photos, and videos. When a

conflict arises, some choose to air their grievances in full view of their friends,

while others feel that private communication channels are a more appropriate

place to deal with relationship issues.

Other questions in relation to cyber bullying were surveyed by teens and primarily more

positive interactions were happening than negative interactions. This does not mean that

the negative actions were not happening at all, rather that teens were reporting that SNS

brought more positive highlights than negative highlights. Even though adolescents are

stating that more positive interactions are taking place on SNS we also know that

negative interactions are happening too and cyber-bullying can be just as problematic as

face-to-face bullying Lenhart (2011). In Lenhart's (2010) study she concluded that in

addition to the physical and verbal bullying that may take place at school, cyber-bullying

in the form of harassing text messages and derogatory posts on teen's Facebook or

Twitter accounts is having an effect on teen's emotional and psychological developments.

In Boyd's (2008) qualitative research study on the role of networked publics in

teenage life and his recently written book he states that youth in today's world have daily

access and engagement in more online SNS and video sharing than any other group.

Boyd (2015, pg. 140) states:

Acts of meanness and cruelty, pranking and punking, gossip and bullying, and

digital self-harm are all wrapped up in other personal, interpersonal, and social

dynamics. Teens are struggling with their own sense of self, how they relate to

others, and what it means to fit into the broader world. They face pressures to

conform and they struggle to understand what's acceptable and normative while

listening to the messages that surround them. For better or worse, much of what

they're trying to do is figure out where they stand.

As mentioned previously in Boyd's (2008) study, negative actions on SNS happen still and even though the negative comments are viewed as minor details to youth, these negative aspects are not easily excusable by adult caregivers.

Duggan et al., (2012) took a Functional Assessment approach in his study on, non-suicidal self-injury, youth and the internet and concluded that this is especially true when it comes to teens using SNS to share their non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) behaviors. Duggan's et al., (2012) research has suggested that the manner by which some teens may share their non-suicidal self-injury experiences online (i.e. pictures of non-suicidal self-injury, comments promoting the behavior) may lead to reinforcement of the behavior for some teens when this material is repeatedly accessed via SNS. Many non-suicidal self-injury experiences disclosed online contain detailed descriptions of non-suicidal self-injury that emphasize emotional pain and suffering without a recovery-oriented message about prognosis (Duggan et al., 2012). Periodically non-suicidal self-injury was presented as an effective means to cope with stress or painful (i.e. bullying) experiences. Duggan et al. (2012, pg. 3) stated:

…several individuals reported on their website that they experienced non-suicidal

self-injury urges and even self-injured pursuant to seeing non-suicidal self injury

imagery or reading graphic non-suicidal self-injury descriptions.

These can result in derailments to youth's social, emotional and psychological growth (Lee, 2009). Additionally, there are other cases where non-suicidal self-injury may be

justified or even glamourized, which reinforces this behavior to vulnerable teens seeking

help or comfort (Duggan et al., 2012).

Social Media outlets are a force to be reckoned with. Social media has permeated

the American lifestyle, and virtually no teen is immune (Boyd, 2015). SNS is being used

for both negative (i.e. non-suicidal self-injury) and positive things equally. Along with

non-suicidal self-injury behaviors, researchers are also finding other negative

psychological disorders being unassumingly glamourized on these SNS. Eating disorders

and addictions of all kinds are also being displayed among popular social networks and

are giving the wrong message to teens (Tanner, 2015). In Tanner's qualitative study, on

girls, Instagram and the glamorization of self-loathing, she concludes that within the SNS

subculture, adolescent girls share photos, which depict and in many ways promote eating

disorders and other addictions. For example, they often communicate the idea that

cutting, drinking, and starving themselves relieves negative emotional states, such as

stress, anxiety, loneliness, and depression. While people who self-harm through

addictions do really experience a sense of relief when they engage in these behaviors,

these images become problematic in that they send the message to those who have never

self-injured that doing so will help them relieve feelings of distress (Tanner, 2015).

Undoubtedly these behaviors are having a negative impact on teen's emotional

development (Tanner, 2015).

Through a systematic review of the literature, this research paper will analyze

peer-reviewed journal articles that have already addressed SNS effects on teen's social,

emotional, and psychological well-being. The intent of this study is to gather information

through a systematic review to identify a comprehensive understanding of what effects,

both negative and positive, do social networking sites have on our teens in todays' media-saturated world.

Methodology

Study Design The purpose of this study was to understand how social networking sites effect our teenagers' social and emotional development. The method chosen was a systematic review. A systematic review is a method used to gather information either based on a lack of information on a certain topic (i.e. Social networking and teens) or a lack of clarity about the topic. This study was conducted through an exhaustive review of a precise question with specific steps in how articles were collected (Toft, 2014). Gathering evidenced-based research through a systematic review of the literature focuses on a collection of the best available research that has already been conducted by others addressing an explicit research question (Toft, 2014). Information from the collected studies was gathered through the chosen methods and completed findings from each study.

Conducting research through a systematic review of the literature allows researchers to collect knowledge of information already researched to find common language or an understanding on how the particular topic affects social work practice. The question the researcher sought to answer was, *" How are social networking sites affecting teen's social, emotional, and psychological well-being?"* using a systematic review approach allows for more comprehensive research to identify the newness of SNS effects. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the risks and/or benefits of media exposure on America's adolescents.

Inclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria includes, both qualitative and quantitative peer-reviewed articles between the years of 2005 through the present. Subjects were to be between the ages of 12 through18. The databases used were clinPSYC (four studies found), Social Work Abstracts (four studies found), ERIC (six studies found), CommunityWise (three studies found), and CareData (three studies found).

Twenty studies were gathered from five databases. After closer examination of the research studies five were excluded since they did not fit into the inclusion criteria. In addition, key search words included: teens, youth, social networks, social media, identity, social development, and emotional development, and risks or benefits.

Analysis

In analysis of the final data, the researcher input information from each study's methods and findings section into a chart to easily track the information of the studies. A method was then identified for assessing the quality of the study when the final number of studies was being analyzed.   Three criteria were chosen to rate the quality of each study. The researcher rated the quality of studies by their knowledge of social networking sites, accessibility to adolescents, and whether they had a control or comparison group. Table 1 shows how each study rated on the quality assurance variables.

Table1. Rating of Studies based on Quality Assurance Variables

Study	1 (poor) Number of studies	2 (moderate) Number of studies	3 (high) Number of studies
The Effect of Social Network Sites on Adolescents Social and Academic Development: Current Theories and Controversies. Ahn, J.			x
It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens Boyd, D.	x		
Why Youth Heart Social Network Sites: The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life Boyd, D.		x	
Iming, Text Messaging, and Adolescent Social Networks Bryant et al.			x
The Impact of Social Media on Children, Adolescents, and Families Duggan et al.		x	
Non-Suicidal Self-Injury, Youth, and the Internet: What Mental Health Professionals Need to Know		x	
Erikson, On Identity			x
The Kaiser Family Foundation Kaiser, V.J.	x		
Understanding Social Networks: On Young People's Construction and Co-Construction of Identity Online Larsen, M.C.			x
Online Communication and Adolescent Social Ties Lee, S. J.			x
Teens, Smartphones, and Texting Lenhart, A.		x	
Teens, Kindness, and Cruelty on Social Network Sites Lenhart et al.		x	
Social Media and Mobile Internet Use Lenhart et al.		x	
Instagram and the Glamorization of Self-Loathing Tanner, E.		x	
Toft, J.	x		

The studies were ranked with a one (Poor), two (moderate), and three (high) to mark their quality of information.   The overall quality of the findings can only be ranked at a medium based on all the criteria needing to be met within each study found. After the studies were broken down into their appropriate ranking the researcher broke them down based on the specific criterion being looked for in each study.

Knowledge of social networking sites was one criterion. Ten out of the fifteen articles used in this study focused on social networking sites while the other five only discussed computer and cell phone usage (i.e. texting and being online). The five that did not mention knowledge of social networking sites were ranked as a one. Of the ten that expressed knowledge in SNS six of them received a rank of two and the other four ranked at a three. The last three specifically talked about SNS (i.e. Instagram, Snap Chat, Facebook, etc.) and their effects on teens.

The accessibility to adolescents that each study had was difficult to rank. Of the fifteen studies the statistical analysis methods seemed to have the highest access to adolescents which gave them a quality score of three, however; these studies did not offer enough narrative information on the research question. The lack of narrative information in these studies in regards to the stats they were gathering made them a two on the quality scale. The rest of the studies were ranked at a two due to some studies neglect to state how many adolescent groups they had access to and used in their research. Two of the studies were rated at a one because they discussed more than just adolescents. Those particular studies included young adults and children in their research methods.

Comparison groups were also noted in ranking the articles used in this study. Looking at SNS and their effects on teens' social and emotional development only studies that related to those fields needed to be included. Also included studies that talked about NSSI and other mental health problems related to SNS. These studies were included because they spoke to adolescents' emotional well-being. Out of the fifteen articles only seven of them compared those two criterion with SNS. Five of those articles were ranked in the high (three) category and the other two were ranked as moderate (two). The ones ranked at a one had a lot of statistical analysis methods used, which could not give an accurate quantitative measure of effects on social and emotional development. The rest of the five articles included in the study had a non-equivalent comparison group or no comparison groups, and they were ranked as a one as well.

Findings

There were many themes present in the studies gathered; including, socialization and communication, SNS addictions, NSSI, risks and benefits, computers verses cell phones, SNS usage, emotional development of teens, identity and SNS, academic development, identity/SNS, and gaming on electronics. However, three main themes were taken from the studies. These three main studies were analyzed in all studies. These included the impact of SNS on a) social development, b) emotional development, and c) academic development. Seven of the studies offered a correlation between one of these themes and social networking sites. Nine of the studies offered a correlation between benefits and risks of SNS.

Impact on Social Development

Twelve studies state that SNS benefits teenage social development. The summary of this idea is that SNS is massively used by teens and has become the only means of communication amongst most of them: with that, SNS is helping today's youth form their identity. Erikson (1959) states identity is a crucial aspect to the social development of teens. Boyd's (2008) qualitative study on networked teens discusses that SNS are providing teens with a space to develop identity and status, make sense of cultural cues, and negotiate public life. Boyd's study looked at the common reasons teens in today's world "heart" social media.   Boyd (2008) and Ahn (2011) mention that SNS is how teens are staying connected with their friends and is also how they are making friends, via sharing pictures and ideas.

All fifteen studies compare past and present means of communication. The technologies that adolescents utilize today are new and how teenagers use them to communicate with each other is clearly unique. Nevertheless, the technologically mediated activities that our youth participate in are similar to past generations Boyd (2015) states:

> *Just as they have done in the parking lots and shopping malls, teens gather in networked public spaces for a variety of purposes, including to negotiate identity, gossip, support one another, jokey for status, collaborate, share information, flirt, joke, and goof off. They go there to hang out.*

According to Ahn (2011) and Boyd (2015) research, studies that mention the benefits of SNS and teens state that SNS are important places for youth to develop their personal identity and socialize with their friends.

The fifteen research studies also discussed the risks SNS can have on the social

lives of teens. Ahn's (2011) study discusses that parents are fearful about safety when it

comes to teens and SNS. Ahn (2011) continues, that this is a very real fear for parents to

have because most SNS neglect to include access to parents, caregivers, and educators.

There are many security settings to the different SNS out there that make it virtually

impossible for caring adults to enter into their teens networked world (Ahn, 2011). The

high security also means that caregivers cannot control what is being posted and/or said

on these sites. This concern relates with another scary risk of teens having lots of access

to SNS. The lack of safety features on SNS for teen users makes them an easy prey to

bullying and harassment online and privacy concerns. Ahn (2011) discussed further the

dangers of predators on SNS and the vulnerability of teens. Predators know that teens'

today are always on SNS and are therefore on just as much to lure vulnerable teens (Ahn,

2011). Larsen's (2007) qualitative study on understanding networked teens stated that

more teens are victim to online sex offenders then even before because of incessant use

on SNS amongst teens.

Many of the studies offered compelling evidence that what one puts on one's SNS

profile is assessed by others and the characteristics of *friends* are strongly related to how

one is viewed. This is supported in Lee's (2009) study as mentioned that in addition to

judging others based on their profiles, SNS users appear to judge the credibility of profile

information quite consistently. Lee (2009), mentions that on SNS teens are judged by the

company they keep. Lenhart's (2010) and (2011) studies mentioned that positive and

negative comments left on a person's Facebook wall also greatly influence whether they

are seen as attractive.

Boyd (2015) and Lee (2009) studies discussed that the usage of SNS have disabled teens awareness of surroundings. Teens lack observational skills due to their head consistently looking down scrolling through different SNS and or texting. Lee (2009) emphasizes that teens today have become unaware of how to get places due to the usage of their electronics while driving, because teens are not tracking where they are going while riding in a car. Lee (2009) further mentions that teens lack a sense of safety when at public events due to them being glued to their SNS and not being aware of who is around them and the situations going on around them. Boyd's (2015) study concluded that adolescents also miss out on the ability to engage with people face to face when they are in public. Although socializing in the networking world is good, SNS's are restricting teen's ability to have face-to-face communication skills that are necessary for everyday life (Boyd, 2015).

Impact on Emotional Development

Out of the fifteen articles only two discuss the benefits of SNS on teen's emotional development. Boyd (2015) stated that because SNS are seen as a means to form identity and socialize with their peers, then the positive interaction that are taking place only help to boost teen's emotional health.   Livingstone (2008) also mentions this idea that self-presentation in SNS develops identity and trust in others which is also beneficial to the emotional health of teens. Livingstone (2008) explains that if positive interactions are seen on one's profile pages then those interactions can make a teen more likable by their peers. For example; if teen A posts something nice about teen B and teen C sees these posts, then teen C might want to start hanging out with or like teen B and A

better. Teen A has boosted her self through posting something nice about someone and teen B is liked because someone posted something nice about them (Livingstone, 2008).

Contrary to the two studies that mention benefits, all fifteen articles mention the risks of SNS on the emotional development of teens. All studies discussed bullying and sexting (i.e. sending nude pictures, talking in a sexual manner) as the top two emotional risk to teens. In Lee's (2009) study she discusses the effects of cyber-bullying on teens. Through Lee's (2009) quantitative study she concluded that it could cause profound psychological outcomes including depression, anxiety, severe isolation, and tragically, suicide through her surveys given to 1,312 adolescents.   She also talked about the legal ramifications of sexting. Teens can be charged with felony child pornography charges (Clarke-Pearson, 2015). Aside from felony charges teens can be suspended from school. Lee (2009) states based off her surveys that 20% of teens have sent or posted nude or seminude photos or videos of themselves.

In Ahn's (2011) quantitative study she looked at Kraut's (1998) HomeNet study that recorded the number of hours teens spent online (with a tracking device) and its relationship to future measures of psychological well-being. The researchers found that longer use of the Internet was related to increased depression, loneliness, and smaller social circles. The results suggest that SNS can be isolating and have a negative impact on family life (Kraut, 1998). Lee (2009) mentioned that time spent on SNS can cause risky internet use that can lead to dangerous outcomes, such as viewing pornography or talking with unknown adults (sexual predators). Lenhart's (2010) quantitative study, using surveys and questionnaires, on social media and internet use among teens reported that 95% of teens spend more time comparing themselves and judging others on SNS

then they normally would in the hallways of their schools. Lenhart (2010) concluded that comparing and judging could cause severe loneliness and isolation amongst teens resulting in negative emotional health based on qualitative research taken from another study in Lenhart's (2010) introduction.

Three studies discuss non-suicidal self-injury as being a serious emotional risk to teenagers. Livingstone (2008) discuses teenagers' use of SNS for intimacy, privacy and self-expression in a qualitative study, and further states that teens express narcissistic fascination with these self-displays. Posting selfies and other non-suicidal self-injury behaviors are only a few of these narcissistic behaviors and can have major consequences to teens emotional health explains Livingstone (2008). Livingstone (2008) explains that narcissistic behavior is when a teen has an erotic gratification from admiration of his or her own physical or mental attributes, and can be taken s step further by glamorizing self-injury behaviors. SNS have made these behaviors much easier to display due to how public SNS is. A non-suicidal self-injury behavior is the most alarming of them due to the dangerous effects it has on one's body and the risk of suicidal tendencies discussed Duggan et al., (2012). Duggan et al., (2008) concluded in his qualitative study that adolescents who self-injure may engage in more online activity than those who do not self-injure. Tanner (2015) states, not only does non-suicidal self-injury behaviors effect our teens emotional health, but furthermore; Duggan et al., (2012) reports that many non-suicidal self-injury experiences disclosed online contain detailed descriptions of non-suicidal self-injury that emphasize emotional pain and suffering. This type of behavior stems to a greater cultural and societal force that is at work which is pushing not just a few, but hundreds of thousands of girls into the territory of self-loathing (Tanner, 2015).

Impact on Academic Development

SNS represent a new environment through which to examine adolescent social development and learning. Three studies focused on the pros and cons of SNS on teen's academic development. Lee (2009) discusses a few of the benefits for SNS use by stating that if students are not allowed to use the new technologies and contribute to online communities like SNS, they will not be able to develop the skills and technical literacy that will be vital in the future. Lee (2009) further mentions that SNS is teaching teen's vital communication skills that businesses are utilizing making it important for youth to learn for their futures. Boyd (2015) goes into further detail by stating that middle and high school students are using social media to connect with one another on homework and group projects. Boyd (2015) concludes in his study, on the roles of networked publics in teenage social life, that middle school and high school students are using social media to connect with one another and do homework and group projects. The author also comments that some schools successfully use blogs as teaching tools, which has the benefit of reinforcing skills in English, written expression and creativity (Boyd, 2015). Bryant et al's. (2006) stated that the most popular place SNS use is happening is in the school setting (ninety percent) and (eighty-five percent) where they are working on homework.

The risks toward academic development in youth also were mentioned in two studies. Boyd (2008) concluded that SNS has also become a considerable distraction to youth while in the classroom. Forty-seven percent of teens have reported failing classes due to SNS use in the classroom (Lenhart's 2011). Lenhart (2011) found that teens have reported spending up to four hours on SNS after school leaving little room to do

homework or study. Ahn's (2011) study discussed this phenomena in a little more detail suggesting that teens are using SNS during the school day and because of this are reporting, based on surveys taken, that they are not understanding what is going on in their classes. When they get home and are expected to do their homework they do not understand what is to be done due to SNS distractions in class so they relinquish to their electronic devices, yet again, to engage in SNS (Ahn, 2011).

Discussion

Summary of Results

This study offers a systematic review of research surrounding the effects of SNS on youth's social and emotional development. SNS are an intriguing new area to study because the technology is such an integral part of adolescent life. Given the popularity, parents and educators have considerable concerns about the effects of SNS. The qualitative and quantitative studies discuss both benefits and risks to teen's social and emotional health. The studies have shown how youth use SNS, build culture in these online communities, and perform communication behaviors that are linked to their development and positive social effects. Moreover, they also show significant risks SNS has on teenagers' health such as, cyber-bullying and NSSI behaviors. The social benefits appeared more positively significant then the emotional effects. The emotional risks appeared to be more negatively significant to teen's usage of SNS.

The academic significance of SNS on teens was not initially included in the research. This became one of the three main themes found through the initial research that concluded that academic risks and benefits are seen amongst teens and SNS usage.

SNS is used to help teens stay on track with their homework and tests as well as being used as a distraction.

Implications of Social Work Practice

Implications for social work practice should continue to be considered given the complexity of the effects of SNS on youth. Social workers need to be aware of this new socialization venue for teens and the effects that may continue to arise. Social workers can become more aware of the effects on teens through educating themselves on all the different SNS out there. New SNS are continually presenting themselves as well as added features to the current SNS, and therefore, continued education on SNS is a priority when working with the adolescents of America.

Since the risks and benefits of SNS are both represented careful consideration of social, emotional and academic perspectives need to be paid attention to. Adults and educators have a tendency to disapprove of SNS use amongst teens; however, based on the research, the use of SNS has a significant role in forming youth's identity. Nurturing this concept is important in a world where teens are inundated with SNS every day.

On the contrary, there are also significant risks to SNS. More importantly how are teens choosing to use SNS is the risky part. Cyber-bullying and promoting destructive behaviors are just a couple of the risks mentioned in this paper that are extremely destructive to youth's emotional and psychological development. Being extra cautious of the risks and how hard these behaviors can be to track is important for social workers to be aware of.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations of this study must be noted. The research literature pertaining to youth (12-18) and SNS is only just emerging, with few studies that explicitly consider the unique contexts of teenagers. Given the search criteria, not many articles were found. Even after expanding the search to both males and females there was limited research out there on the effects of SNS on youth. The societal impact of youth media research is significant because teens today are the first to grow up in a world of technology and there is not much research out there on these youth at this time.

Researchers of SNS have a unique opportunity to build a new area of study in the area of SNS. Not researched in this paper was the concept of teens having immediate access to celebrities. Through Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter and other SNS teens can "follow" celebs and converse with them like they can their peers at school. This idea poses a whole other area of study for SNS effects on youth. In addition, research on social media effects is vital to inform the societal debates and concerns about new technology and youth.

Concluding, teenagers of America are being affected by their SNS use in both negative and positive ways. Contemporary youth are growing up in a cultural setting in which many aspects of their lives are mediated by SNS and many of their experiences and opportunities are shaped by their engagement with social media. A systematic review of fifteen studies has proved that SNS is not a negative thing, but in fact, SNS use has many positive aspects for our teens that are growing up in this media saturated world. The benefits of SNS are equally comparable emphasizing the importance of further research.

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