

# SOCIAL MEDIA, DRUG ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH OF TEENAGERS

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## ABSTRACT

Young generation experimenting with drugs and alcohol is nothing new; however, adolescents are being exposed to drugs in new and risky ways thanks to social networking sites. Teens are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of what they see on social media, as they are particularly sensitive to peer pressure and peer factors. Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat offer an environment where kids can see celebrities and regular people alike participating in activities and risky behaviors involving substance abuse.

In addition to drug exposure through marketing and advertising, social media is that the catalyst for several psychological state problems which will cause abuse. Social media perpetuates social comparison during a world where everything is curated, which is particularly problematic for teens who are more in danger of depressive cognitions within the face of social comparison. Social media use is said to psychological state issues including depression, sleep disturbance, and disordered eating among kids. What effect does social media have on the mental, emotional, and physical health of teenagers? How has the use of social media by adolescents influenced their drug use, including the use of medication and alcohol? It's important for parents, guardians, teachers, and adolescents to consider how social media can influence teen drug use. This article will analyze the impacts of social media substance use and offer advice on addressing it.

## KEYWORDS

TEENAGERS, DRUGS, SOCIAL MEDIA, ADOLESCENTS, MENTAL HEALTH

## INTRODUCTION

A chapter excerpted from British author Jeremy Seabrook, on global climate change and its inner landscapes, had these powerful lines on the character of the beast: “Addiction may be a basement and dependency, thralldom and obsession—whether to drugs, gambling, spending, mobility, sex, consolation, escape, entertainment or the other distraction to be procured by money, itself the foremost addictive substance known to humanity...Addiction is an intelligible and efficient response to a world made unintelligible by continuous economic, technological and social change. it's no aberrant condition but expresses something essential about the character of the ‘freedoms’ which overwhelm us.”

To pick up from the last line about ‘freedoms’, it's quite revealing on how internet platforms and tools that were advertised as offering greater freedoms and deeper democracy have today become entwined with dangerous reminder addiction and a totalitarian impulse to remain the earth incomprehensible. The way we interact with the world has changed as a result of social media. They've altered the way we interact with politics, gather knowledge, maintain relationships, and make decisions. The impact has been even greater for people that are growing up with access to social media access.

While that social media and medicines are connected in how, the subsequent question is why? Social media could also be a comparatively new phenomenon so research on the topic still must be done. variety of the suspected reasons for the connection between social media and drug use is additionally that social media glamorizes substance abuse, hurts psychological state, finishes up in additional exposure to such substances, and offers another means of buying drugs.

## SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION IN TEENAGERS

Social media is any digital tool that enables users to quickly create and share content with the general public. Social media encompasses a large range of internet sites and apps. Some, like Twitter, focus on sharing links and short written messages. Others, like Instagram and TikTok, are built to optimize the sharing of photos and videos. What makes social media unique is that it's both broad and comparatively uncensored. They'll use that account to share whatever content they favor to, and also the content they share reaches anyone who visits their page or profile.

Whether people employ social media to attach with friends and loved ones, watch videos, or just “kill time,” the recognition of this pastime has increased significantly over the last decade. This can be especially the case in children and teenagers, in addition as young to middle-aged adults. Like other kinds of behavioral addictions, using social media can influence the brain in harmful ways. People use social media compulsively and excessively and are able to become so familiar with scrolling through posts, images, and videos that it interferes with other areas of your life.

While social media can look like mindless and relaxing fun, it actually encompasses a significant effect on your brain. Whenever teenagers go online to their favorite apps, dopamine signals in their brain increase. These neurotransmitters are related to pleasure after the person experience more dopamine after using social media, their brain identifies this activity as a rewarding one that they just must repeat. Such a reaction could also be more felt whenever they create a post of their own and gain feedback. The positive feelings experienced during social media use are only temporary. The way the person’s brain engages during this positive reinforcement is additionally seen in other addictions. Thus, as the feel-good dopamine wears off, they will go back to the source (in this case, social media) for more. In some instances, social media can be a good way to distract themselves if the person is isolated or stressed due to work or an illness. The more they engage, the more their brain will tell that this is an activity that can help reduce loneliness.<sup>1</sup>

Social media use amongst teens is almost universal today. About 92% of adolescent users report checking social networking sites over once every day. Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat are the highest social media platforms for young adults. Social media habits vary greatly from person to person. However, teens use a median of 9 hours of entertainment media per day. Of that point, girls spend 1 hour and 32 minutes on social media, while boys spend 52 minutes on that. Extrapolated, this suggests that teenage girls spend approximately 10 hours and 44 minutes on social media per week, while boys spend around 6 hours, 7 minutes thereon. This equals 23.3 days and 13.2 days each year, respectively. Teens use Snapchat most often, However, teens spend the most important amount of your time on YouTube. In fact, YouTube outstrips the other content platform. Teens spend 37% of their daily video streaming time on YouTube and 35% on Netflix. This represents a

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.healthline.com/health/social-media-addiction#how-is-it-addicting>

considerable commitment of teenagers' time. This raises many questions about what they're watching on YouTube and how it may affect their behavior.<sup>2</sup>

Teenage years are a time of rapid development, and the physical, social, and emotional changes that accompany puberty are a vulnerable and turbulent time in life. While social media can provide teens with new avenues for self-expression, socialization, and entertainment, it can also complicate their lives by:

- Distracting teens from maintaining real-world social connections or academic work;
- disrupting sleep due to nighttime usage;
- amplifying unreasonable expectations of oneself and one's relationships
- An increase in negative emotions like nervousness, anger, or sorrow (particularly in posts about negative news or in vitriolic social interactions). This can help with development in which sensitive or intimate photos or stories could become a part of a user's digital footprint
- Exposing them to possible cyberbullying
- Exposing them to peer pressure in respect to narcotic drug use
- Increasing risk for more predatory behavior from adults to teens.

## SOCIAL MEDIA AND DRUG ABUSE IN TEENAGERS

According to a study conducted by Columbia University's National Center on Addiction and Violence, teens who regularly use common social media sites are more likely to consume alcohol, use narcotics, and purchase tobacco than those who either do not use social media or use it infrequently. In the study, 2,000 teenagers were asked about their substance use and social media behaviours, and 70% said they use social media on a daily basis. Researchers discovered that netizens were five times more likely to shop for cigarettes, three times more likely to drink, and two times more likely to use marijuana than nonusers or infrequent users.

College students experimenting with addictive substances is nothing new; however, social networking sites are exposing teens to drugs in new and risky ways. Teens are particularly vulnerable to the effects of what they see on social media, as they are particularly vulnerable to peer pressure and

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<sup>2</sup><https://www.kolmac.com/how-does-social-media-affect-teen-substance-use/>

peer factors. Sites like Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat provide an environment where kids are exposed to famous and normal people alike engaging in risky behaviors involving drugs and alcohol. Celebrities like Justin Bieber, Drake, and Cardi B consistently post pictures of themselves drinking and getting high on a spread of platforms, which is commencing to influence the kids that are viewing it. Stars also promote addictive substances use on social media sites, which youth see and are often encouraged by. Celebrity endorsements make smoking and alcohol seem to be fun, cool habits, which can inadvertently encourage teens to try the same items. Most digital advertisements feature actors, musicians, and glamorous young models, all of whom have been shown to be successful marketing tools for youths. In reality, studies have shown that advertisement is responsible for up to 30% of adolescent smoking and drinking. Furthermore, actors and "influencers" who engage in this activity aren't the only ones who are subjected to it, but also their friends and families. This sort of content normalizes and glamorizes behavior like illicit and ethical drug use still as binge drinking, making teens wrongly believe it's appropriate to try and do the identical.

Ads on social media may promote underage drinking and drug use, in addition to being exposed to those acts by their peers. Tobacco, electronic cigarettes, and alcohol companies have all heavily incorporated social media channels into their marketing campaigns, making them entirely available to teenagers. Using social media advertising, these industries can market to youth, despite the very fact that marketing to minors is against the law.

A study performed by Michigan State University found that individuals who were shown Facebook ads promoting beer were more likely to cherish beverage than those that viewed drinking water ads. Following exposure to the Facebook advertisements, the 121 test subjects were given the option of obtaining a gift card to a cafe or a bar as reward for their involvement in the research. Although 73% of those who saw beer advertisements chose the bar gift card, only 55% of those who saw water advertisements chose the bar as well. The presence of drug use imagery is linked to the onset of addiction, which is why there are limitations on advertising such products within the media to minors; however, social media is proving harder to manage.

Over-the-top media services (OTT) platforms have spread across the country and the contents on them do not come under the purview of the Censor board. At least 40 OTT channels, including global players including Netflix, Amazon Prime, and HotStar (Disney Plus), as well as hundreds of news content websites, are available.

Manoj Kotak (BJP) raised the issue during Zero Hour in the Lok Sabha, saying that some web series encourage violence and substance abuse in the name of freedom of speech. He demanded that the government establish a censorship system and a regulatory authority to monitor offensive content that has an "adverse effect on the nation's youth."

## IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND MENTAL HEALTH OF THE TEENAGERS

Mental health problems and misuse are often connected. Because excess social media use often leads to poorer mental state, these frequent users is additionally turning to drugs or alcohol to help them cope. While these substances may provide a brief lived escape these negative feelings, within the longer term they typically make matters worse.

Research has shown that there is an undeniable link between social media use, negative psychological state, and low self-esteem – all of which could drive underage substance use. When teens are combating emotional problems, they go to often intercommunicate drugs or alcohol as a coping mechanism to help manage their difficult feelings. Checking social media sites often and comparing oneself to others may make children feel sad and lonely. It can not only make users unhappy and dissatisfied with life in general, but also increase the prospect of developing psychological state issues like anxiety and depression. In fact, an estimated 27% of youngsters who spend 3 or more hours every day on social media exhibit symptoms of poor psychological state. Kids who are depressed or anxious (both of which are often aggravated by social media use) may try to cheer themselves up by drinking or using other drugs.

“Children suffering from teenage depression are aware that something is wrong with them. They aren't enjoying themselves; they aren't in a good mood. So if their friends give a medication that makes them happy, that's usually the first thing they talk about.”

-Dr. SarperTaskiran, MD, Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist

Social media has also been linked to negative body image in young adults, in addition to feelings of social alienation and depression. Continued exposure to unrealistic beauty ideals through visual platforms such as Instagram can have an impact on how teenagers view themselves, leading to low self-esteem or eating disorders, depression in adolescents, individuals with low self-esteem may have trouble overcoming negative thoughts and feelings. Subsequently, during a trial to forget or change those feelings, they convey drugs or alcohol as means of escape. Substance use seems to help young users with poor mental health quiet their negative feelings. Self-medicating with medications and

alcohol, on the other hand, just masks the symptoms for a short time, and chronic use actually makes them worse.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

For parents of young adults and teenagers, the connection between social media and drug use is cause for concern. While it should be scary, there are some belongings you'll do to help mitigate these risks for your child. Learning that a young adult in your life has begun using illegal substances like marijuana, other drugs, or alcohol could also be distressing. At now, it's important to seem past your own emotions, assess the case rationally, and discuss the subject with the teenager in an exceedingly constructive manner. Some possible ways to guard your child include:

- Limiting use of internet
- Monitoring internet use
- Talking about the threats of substance and alcoholic abuse
- Practicing free and open communication
- Being aware of behavioral changes
- Addressing problems at early stage of life

These practices will help teens maintain their online reputation and mitigate the results of peer pressure. It is important to maintain an open and supportive relationship with teenagers in order to gain their loyalty. This increases the likelihood that, if they are tempted to experiment with drug use, they can come to you to discuss their feelings before making a mistake.

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