

Chapter 21

At the Mercy of Facebook: A Meta–Analysis on Impact of Social Networking Sites, Teen Brain on Teenage Pregnancies

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ABSTRACT

This chapter is a meta-analysis of teen brain research and social media technology such as Facebook that could result in spiraling rates of teenage pregnancy. The author discusses contemporary theories of brain circuitry including teen brain structure and function as one of the plausible reasons for rising teenage pregnancy rates. The author argues that the challenge is to control the quality and influence of Facebook on teen behaviors, actions, and decisions to minimize the growing influence of social networking sites. In the conclusive section of the chapter, the author focuses on the expansion and extension of instructional and non-instructional physical activities, exergames, and active video games strategies to control the quality and influence of Facebook content by presenting research that advocates use of such activities and games within the Facebook interface. The author ends the chapter by mapping a future research direction of cross-cultural empirical investigation. The author wraps the chapter with a summative conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

“Time and motivation are finite resources... time and motivation spent on social networking sites such as Facebook usually comes at the expense of other activities,” stated Wendy Cousins, a researcher at the University of Ulster in the UK. In a recent online survey of 350 high school students and undergraduates, Cousins found that teens spent more than 65% of the day posting and sharing their own pictures, messaging someone, viewing profiles of each other, and commenting on each other’s social status. Time that should have spent doing homework, researching future career options, engaging in community activities, talking with friends and family in person, and playing a game (Nauert, 2015). The survey

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sought to investigate the motivation of daily addictive use of Facebook by teens. Cousins stated that teens experienced a ‘high’ and a sense of excitement, social approval and thrill when they viewed a ‘like’ on their Facebook site (Nauert, 2015). The compulsion to replicate the sensation and thrill stated Cousins was one of the chief distinguishing features of teen behavior. Consequences such as becoming pregnant while still in school; engaging in risky behaviors of drinking and drug addiction, pornography do not seem to hold any value (Nauert, 2015). A similar trend has been sweeping across US as Facebook usage was recorded at 73% among teens i.e. adolescents under age of 19 (Madden, Lenhart, Cortesi, Gasser, Duggan, Smith, & Beaton, 2013). According to National Center of Health Statistics [NCHS] researchers, this increase impacted rates of teenage pregnancy significantly with 71.5% teen pregnancies for every 1000 teen girls between ages of 13-19 in 2017 (Landry, Turner, Vyas, & Wood, 2017). Teen girls were more prone to posting and sharing pictures; engaging in risky behavior to experience a ‘high’ thrill of excitement (Landry et al., 2017). NCHS researchers established a tenuous but direct link between increase in Facebook usage and teenage pregnancy rates with 25% increase in states of Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, and Texas in 2017 (Madden et al., 2013). More than 26 US states clocked in high rates of teenage pregnancy with more than 72 live birth for every 1000 teen girls aged 15 (Landry et al., 2017). This increase was found to be positively significantly correlated i.e. 49.4% increase in sexual behavior leading to teenage pregnancy due to increased Facebook usage in terms of time and quality i.e. teens were spending maximum time on Facebook posting, sharing provocative pictures, sexting, and real-time sexual activity (Landry et al., 2017). Social networking sites such as Facebook propelled and influenced teens to engage in risky behaviors of gambling, sexual activity whilst in school, sexting, pornographic behavior, and teenage pregnancy (Geidd, 2013).

The chapter, written from a US perspective, maps out how excessive usage in terms of time and misplaced motivation of Facebook leads to irresponsible, harmful and/or risky behavior and action that could result in teenage pregnancy. The author charts an extensive literature review of prevalence of social networking sites focusing primarily on Facebook; theoretical perspectives discussing contemporary neurobiological theories that show why teens use Facebook despite its harmful effects; and plausible methods of controlling the quality and usage of Facebook time and motivation as a means to shape usage of Facebook to control and minimize consequences of teen pregnancy. In her conclusion, the author reiterates her argument that the theoretical meta analyses serves as a foundational launchpad to initiate and further empirical research.

BACKGROUND

The Internet, iPads, Google, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat... have successfully invaded and dominated 20th century society. Youth are sharing more of their personal information on social networking sites than in the past (Gao, 2015). Statistics released by NCHS on teenage attitude, behavior, and action reveal this gradual progression of digital technology over human society (Madden et al, 2013). More than 95% of all people, adult and teenage including adolescents and senior citizens used the Internet and one social networking site almost daily (Lenhart, 2015). In her research, Lenhart stated that usage of the Internet, cell phones, and various social networking sites began as early as ten years in school children and peaked during teenage years at ages ranging from 13-17 (Lenhart, 2015). In 2010, US teens spent an average of 8.5 hours daily interacting with social media technology be it Facebook,

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