

The Use of Social Media Among Adolescents with Eating Disorders: A Double- Edged Sword

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Abstract - Background: - Adolescence is a critical stage of life when positive behaviors are acquired and developed to enhance quality of life and physical functioning. At this stage, one should eat well, be physically active, and like and accept oneself. The use of social media is also a part of the life of adolescents with numerous benefits, but misinformation may produce a negative health impact. Adolescents are resultant of what is posted on social media, which quite often includes a lot of fast junk food marketing advertisements. These postings, in turn, influence their food preferences and selections by which they can alter the way they view what is considered a healthy eating habit.

The use of social media has been linked to eating disorder like behaviors and higher rates of depression in teenagers. Teenagers who view health and fitness related material on social media for example is impacted by the commercial and celebrity sponsored foods that are not always nutritious. Teenagers see food advertisement posts all around them, since social media use is one of the favorite smart phones based activities they take part in. This exposure influences their food choices and food preferences, which can trigger the development of long-term medical disorders. It is therefore; very important to know and evaluate the impact and influence of social media on the eating habits of teenagers and others in general.

Objective: - This article examines the relationship between social media addiction and eating attitudes with an emphasis on the psychological and behavioral pathways that link online behaviors with eating disorders.

Methods: - A review of contemporary literature (2020-2025) with both Indian and international studies were undertaken. Standardized measures such as the social media addiction scale and the eating attitudes test conducted in 2026 which were considered in establishing an association between social media addiction and eating attitudes.

Conclusion: - The presence of social media addiction has a potentially significant effect on eating attitudes, which can increase the risk of disordered eating and risk of

developing condition disorders. Prevention mechanisms related to digital legacy, promoting body positivity, and psychological counseling is a necessary mechanism to combat the growing issues on health.

Keywords: -Social Media Addiction, Eating Attitudes, Body Image, Adolescents, Eating Disorders.

I.INTRODUCTION

Eating disorders affect the body, mind, and overall well-being of adolescents. During this critical stage of life, young individuals are highly influenced by role models and social environments. In the modern era, social media plays a powerful role in shaping adolescents' thoughts, behaviors, and self-image. Excessive use of social media can lead to addiction, where adolescents spend a significant amount of time engaging with online content, often at the cost of their mental and physical health.

Research indicates that eating disorders are increasingly common among adolescents, particularly between the ages of 15 and 19. Studies also show that these disorders are more prevalent among females compared to males. A large percentage of youth are actively engaged in social media, where they are constantly exposed to images, videos, and advertisements related to food and body image. This exposure significantly influences their eating habits and attitudes toward food.

Eating attitude refers to how individuals think about food and behave around eating. A healthy attitude involves balance, awareness, and self-control, while a negative attitude includes emotional eating, irregular meals, and excessive dieting. Common problems among youth include fast food consumption, skipping meals, and screen-based eating habits.

To prevent these issues, strategies such as digital literacy, parental guidance, and professional support are essential. Encouraging mindful eating, regular routines, and limiting social media use can promote healthier lifestyles.

There is a strong link between social media addiction and negative eating behaviors. Key factors include body image pressure, where adolescents compare themselves with unrealistic and edited images of celebrities and influencers. Social comparison leads to dissatisfaction and unhealthy attempts to achieve ideal body standards. Cyber bullying and negative comments about appearance can further push individuals toward disordered eating. Additionally, late-night social media use disrupts sleep patterns and contributes to emotional eating.

The need for validation through likes, comments, and followers also affects adolescents' self-esteem, making them associate self-worth with physical appearance. Influencers often promote unverified diet trends, such as crash diets and detox products, which misguide young audiences. Harmful content like "thinspiration" and "fitspiration" encourages unhealthy body ideals and may trigger eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa.

II. DRAWBACKS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION AND EATING ATTITUDES

Social media addiction can harm mental, physical, and social well-being. It may cause anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem due to constant comparison and unrealistic online images. Excessive use reduces productivity by wasting time, lowering concentration, and encouraging procrastination. It also disrupts sleep patterns, leading to fatigue and poor focus. Real-life relationships may suffer as face-to-face interactions decrease, causing loneliness and isolation. Physical health is affected through sedentary habits, resulting in obesity, eye strain, and poor posture. Additionally, it creates addictive behavior, where individuals feel compelled to check devices frequently, interfering with daily activities and overall quality of life.

Unhealthy eating attitudes harm physical and mental health. They can lead to disorders like Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia Nervosa, causing malnutrition and weakness. They also result in low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression. Physical effects include obesity or weight loss, while social isolation and

reduced productivity further impact overall well-being.

In conclusion, while social media offers benefits like communication and education, its excessive use can negatively impact adolescents' eating behaviors and mental health. Awareness, early intervention, and balanced usage are key to ensuring the well-being of young individuals.

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