



A COMPLEX EQUATION:

The Impact of Social Media on Adolescents' Personality Development

Tanuja Hemchand, Dr. R Parvati, Febina K S, Shamimunnisabi
Assistant Professor, Principal, Assistant Professor, Assistant Professor
Department of Commerce,
VET First Grade College, Bengaluru, India.

Abstract : In terms of one's physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development, adolescence is a time of significant change. Although these transitions occur throughout life, they can be particularly difficult during the tween and teen years. Utilizing social media has become a part of growing up, and while there are benefits, there are also risks that might jeopardise people's emotional health. Given that they did not go through a similar rite of passage into adulthood, it is particularly crucial for parents and other essential careers to understand the impact of contemporary media in order to manage its complexity. This paper aims to look at social media's impact on personality development in adolescents through a review of the literature and a qualitative study. The study entails both psychological and social factors impacting personality development.

IndexTerms - Social media, personality, development, adolescence, Freud.

I.INTRODUCTION

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The dynamic creation and deconstruction of integrative features that set a person apart in terms of interpersonal behavioural traits are included in personality development. Personality development is dynamic and influenced by environmental influences and significant life events. The description of personality development is also multifaceted and subjective in character. The process through which the structured thought and behaviour patterns that make up an individual's distinct personality evolve over time is referred to as personality development.

Numerous elements, such as genetics, environment, upbringing, and cultural issues, have an impact on personality. The combination of all these factors, maybe most significantly, is what continues to mould personality. Along with innate characteristics, personality also entails the formation of cognitive and behavioural patterns that affect our thoughts and behaviours. In other words, personality change and intensity can be thought of as a continuum. Its conceptualization is based on social norms of acceptable behaviour, self-expression, and personal development, making it subjective in nature.

The stability of a person's personality has been proven to vary over the course of their lives, though this variation levels off in adulthood. The variation shown over the course of the lifespan can be explained by behavioural genetics. The transitions between childhood, adolescence, and adulthood are stark examples of this. The rate of personality differences among individuals rises from early childhood through mid-adolescence, mostly as a result of environmental factors.

II. Understanding Personality Formation

To explain the numerous phases and steps that take place throughout the development of personality, several eminent philosophers have proposed theories. The theories that follow concentrate on many facets of personality development, including those that include moral, social, and cognitive growth.

Sigmund Freud - Stages of Psychosexual Development:

According to Sigmund Freud's well-known stage theory of psychosexual development, personality traits are thought to evolve in phases that correspond to particular erogenous zones. The stages are:

- Stage 1 - Oral stage (birth to 1 year)
- Stage 2 - Anal stage (1 to 3 years)
- Stage 3 - Phallic stage (3 to 6 years)
- Stage 4 - Latent period (age 6 to puberty)
- Stage 5 - Genital stage (puberty to death)

Freud built a framework for how personality is formed overall in addition to his theories about how personality changed over childhood. The element of personality present at birth is known as the id. People are driven to satisfy their most fundamental needs and urges by this aspect of their psyche, which is the most primitive. The personality trait known as the ego is in charge of reining in the desires and pushing them to act in a realistic manner. The superego, which holds all of the principles, morals, and values instilled by our parents and culture, is the last part of the personality to form.

These three components of personality, in Freud's view, interact to produce complex human behaviours. The superego makes an effort to influence the ego to act in line with these goals. The ego must therefore strike a balance between the idealistic standards of the superego, reality, and instinctual d's demands.

Erik Erikson - Stages of Psychosocial Development:

Another well-known psychological theory is the eight-stage theory of human development proposed by Erik Erikson. Erikson opted to concentrate on how social relationships affect personality development, even if this builds on Freud's stages of psychosexual development. The idea also considers development over the course of the entire lifespan, not just in childhood. Erikson's eight stages of personality development are:

- Stage 1 - Trust versus mistrust (birth to 1 year)
- Stage 2 - Autonomy versus shame and doubt (1 to 2 years)
- Stage 3 - Initiative versus guilt (3 to 5 years)
- Stage 4 - Industry versus inferiority (6 to 11 years)
- Stage 5 - Identity versus role confusion (12 to 18 years)
- Stage 6 - Intimacy versus isolation (19 to 40 years)
- Stage 7 - Generativity versus stagnation (41 to 64 years)
- Stage 8 - Integrity versus despair (65 years to death)

People encounter a crisis when a task needs to be accomplished in each of these stages. Those who make it through that stage successfully come out feeling accomplished and content.

Jean Piaget - Stages of Cognitive Development:

Despite receiving a lot of criticism, Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development is one of the ones that psychology references the most. Although many elements of his theory have not lasted the test of time, the fundamental concept—that kids think differently than adults—remains relevant today. Piaget theorised that children pass through a set of four phases, each of which is distinguished by a distinct shift in the way the kid thinks. Additionally, the development of personality is significantly influenced by how children view themselves, other people, and their environment.

Piaget's four stages are:

- Stage 1 - Sensorimotor stage (birth to 2 years)
- Stage 2 - Preoperational stage (2 to 7 years)
- Stage 3 - Concrete operational stage (7 to 11 years)
- Stage 4 - Formal operational stage (12 years and up)

Lawrence Kohlberg - Stages of Moral Development:

A hypothesis of personality development put out by Lawrence Kohlberg focused on the expansion of moral reasoning. Adding to Piaget's two-stage process, Kohlberg developed the theory to include six additional stages:

- Stage 1 - Obedience and punishment
- Stage 2 - Individualism and exchange
- Stage 3 - Developing good interpersonal relationships
- Stage 4 - Maintaining social order
- Stage 5 - Social contract and individual rights
- Stage 6 - Universal principles

Kohlberg argued that although this theory has six phases, it is uncommon for humans to advance past stage four and emphasised that these stages of moral development are unrelated to the maturation process. For a variety of reasons, Kohlberg's theory of moral formation has drawn criticism. Its failure to equally accept different genders and cultures is one of its main criticisms. However, the hypothesis is still vital to our comprehension of how personality changes. Explaining how each of us develops our own distinctive traits and characteristics is the aim of personality development theories. Although there are countless possibilities, the majority of these personality traits can be divided into five groups:

Openness: Level of imagination and adaptability to change

Consciousness: Degree of preparation and focus on the details

Extraversion: The degree to which one is sociable and emotionally expressive

Agreeableness: Cooperativeness and degree of interest in others

Level of emotional stability and moodiness, or neuroticism

III. Personality Development in Adolescence

Social stressors may particularly accompany changes in cognitive and behavioural development in children as they grow up within a social context of interactions. Parents, friends, teachers, and school-related demands are the primary causes of social stress among adolescents (Murberg and Bru, 2004; Byrne et al., 2007). These pressures may be a result of changes in the brain's socio-emotional system that occur with the onset of puberty (Steinberg, 2008). In addition, because they help an adolescent feel like "who I am," these social situations are essential for the development of their personalities. It is not unexpected that adolescence marks a crucial phase for the personality development of young people given these different developmental changes that are integrated within social connections and the brain. So processing stressors and taking in social input may be a major developmental issues during adolescence.

This process of development is mostly influenced by social contexts since peers, families, and schools have an impact on how adolescents view themselves. The creation of identity and personality is continuously and reciprocally influenced by social interactions, including the social feedback from the environment that children and adolescents grow up in, in accordance with the relational-developmental systems perspective (Lerner and Lerner, 2019). The developing brain is very sensitive to environmental stimuli, making it particularly susceptible to stressors during adolescence. As a result, the brain changes in structure (Tottenham and Galvan, 2016).

Due to the FFM's strong stability over broad age ranges and cross-cultural validity (McCrae and Costa, 1997), it has gained popularity as a model for evaluating personality. However, adolescents exhibit far less stability in the five components than do adults, indicating that personality traits are susceptible to change at that age. There is a lack of overall consistency between investigations, even if several studies point to distinct trends. The main explanation offered by FFM theorists for these contradictions is that as adolescence approaches, people begin to think more deeply about who they are, how they connect with others, and how others might perceive them. Researchers may occasionally encounter alpha values below 0.40, particularly in late childhood and early adolescence, according to prior studies. There is consensus, nevertheless, that these swings in reliability don't level off and the constructs don't become more stable until late adolescence and early adulthood.

IV. The equation between Social Media and Adolescents

Adolescence is a period of tremendous change in one's physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development. The tween and teen years are when these transitions can be the most challenging, even though they happen throughout life. Social media use has become a part of growing up, and while there are advantages, there are also dangers that can put people's emotional well-being in jeopardy. It is especially important for parents and key carers to comprehend the influence of modern media in order to manage its complexity as they did not experience this similar rite of passage into adulthood.

The majority of our society has embraced social media in just a few short decades. Teenagers utilise a variety of social media platforms extensively, which is a sign that social media play a significant role in their life (Ofcom, 2018). Furthermore, the usage of social media and the variety of platforms available has grown so quickly that there is reason to suspect that the body of scientific research on how social media affects teenagers' health and well-being is fragmented and lacking.

Social media is pervasive; for the majority of young people, it serves as their primary means of communication and connection. In actuality, 81% of teenagers claim that using social media makes them feel closer to their friends. The use of social media by teenagers clearly has this advantage. But for many parents who are raising a generation of kids who have only ever seen a world of social media, this is uncharted territory. This is crucial because, as they transition from childhood to adolescence, kids experience intense peer pressure to "fit in."

Social media trends shift quickly, making it difficult for the research community to stay on top of them. The included research addressed some of the most popular social media platforms, although the number of studies devoted to each platform did not fairly represent the distribution of users today. Despite the fact that some studies covered websites like Instagram and Snapchat, the coverage did not do credit to the number of users these sites had. Although TikTok has several hundred million daily users, it was not addressed in the research that was included.

There have been few studies that have looked at why people choose to use social media or how they are feeling mentally before using it. According to reports, young people occasionally decide to use social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter as an outlet for dangers to their mental health, like feeling too much strain in their daily lives. The uses and gratifications theory can be used to describe this type of escape [see, for example. The need to manage relationships, content, presentation, and

perceptions, on the other hand, maybe another motivational element, and a more recent study suggests that using social media may reinforce adolescents' existing motivations and moods.

With the rise in popularity of social media and the internet came a decline in in-person interaction and a rumoured rise in social isolation. The displacement hypothesis is the name given to this perspective. Many people believe that having a vibrant social life and a supportive society with meaningful relationships is essential for well-being and good mental health, thus the purported decline in social interaction was surely viewed with suspicion by some. Over the past 20 years, there has been a sharp rise in the usage of social media among young people, combined with allegations of an increase in mental health issues.

V. The Impact of Social Media on Adolescents' Personality Development

Teenagers are particularly attached to the internet and other types of media because they were born at a time when technology is at its most advanced and widely accessible. These new media are now thoroughly ingrained in our daily lives. According to a survey done in developed nations, teens spend the second-highest amount of time utilising new media after sleeping compared to any other activity. Adolescents frequently integrate their offline and online worlds through new media, and they use a variety of devices (smartphones, computers, iPads, etc.) to stay connected to their social networks, particularly Facebook and Twitter. The key driving force is constant communication.

The development of children's self-consciousness and growing self-consciousness during adolescence is a crucial component of this stage of life. They have reached an age where they can comprehend the idea of integrating into society while preserving one's independence. Significant physical changes they experience also help them build a positive sense of themselves. Because they may not consider themselves suitable for society or may discover inconsistencies between their true selves and their ideal selves, persons of this age struggle with low self-esteem.

Teenagers may experience a lot of psychological distress during adolescence as they go through an "identity crisis," according to Erik Erikson's Stages of Development. He suggests that at this phase, kids struggle to recognise personality traits that are particular to them and fight identity uncertainty. Lack of identity development can be quite upsetting and have an adverse effect on how well-adjusted they are socially in later life.

Anyone who utilises social networking sites is familiar with the concept of social media popularity; as a result, people may go out of their way to please others in order to become popular. On their social networking site, teenagers are showing signs of becoming more materialistic and false. For instance, taking a stunning profile photo is quite vital for the kids in order to gain more likes and comments from their friends [12]. Young boys are fascinated with uploading images of their abs, while girls as young as 12 submit provocative pictures only to earn likes. A 12-year-old "selfie junkie" recently made an attempt on his life after capturing 200 photos because none of them was "good enough" to use as his display. To come across as attractive,

It should be noted that social networking sites do not often promote anonymity; rather, their primary purpose is to help people connect with one another and the world [6]. The desire to attain fame and seek out praise from others is another reason that goes unnoticed in the widespread use and fascination with social networking. In an effort to increase their number of likes and popularity among friends, many social media users are preoccupied with frequent updating and posting. Self-esteem issues might arise when "friends" do not provide the expected feedback.

According to research, adolescents who use social media more frequently are also more likely to experience stress, anxiety, and depression. Numerous research has discovered a link between frequent Facebook use and emotional suffering. This is true for a variety of reasons. First off, social networking sites' "friendships" are fictitious and unauthentic. Most people have friends on their list who they have rarely or never met in person or spoken to. People start to feel unsatisfied with their lives when they read on their newsfeeds how happy their "friends" are as they frequently publish images and status updates. As a result, the person begins to feel like a "loner" with no active social life, which causes despair and anxiety.

For many years now, social networking sites have been a common Internet trend. Through social media, people stay in continual contact with their friends, making it the most popular method of communication. An important component of social networking websites contain profiles. In order to uphold a particular social standard, people spend a lot of effort making "cool" accounts. It has been shown that people are judged based on their social media profiles and friends.

VI. Conclusion

Social media and the internet have become a significant part of our daily lives and routines. More than ever, social media today has an impact on how we engage with others and form our personalities. Because they were born when social media was at its height, today's teenagers rely on it more than those in prior generations.

It's crucial to consider the unique and individual effects social media has on everyone's growth as a person. A University of Pennsylvania student and researcher named Julia Levitan asserts that social media has had a profound impact on culture, society, and interpersonal relationships. According to Levitan's research, social media use is positively correlated with the big five personality qualities of openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Our capacity for social interaction has gradually been determined by social media.

The interaction between adolescent psychosocial development and social media is nuanced. The risk of having unfavourable social and psychological experiences is balanced against the benefits of clear developmental experiences. With the inclusion of longitudinal evidence, the conclusions go beyond those of earlier reviews on related subjects and highlight the importance of current risk factors as well as protective variables. Studying the effects of social media use is essential, especially in the context of South Africa as social media use spreads. Future studies should examine and evaluate the impact across developmental stages from a South African perspective. In order to maximise the potential advantages of social media while planning for any potential drawbacks, South African health practitioners may benefit from learning from international research on the subject.

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