

Chapter 25

The Effects of Social Networking Sites on Child and Adolescent Psychology: Theory, Research, and Interventions

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ABSTRACT

Social networking sites (SNSs) have become increasingly prevalent in the lives of children and adolescents in recent years. As a result, there is a growing concern about the potential effects of SNSs on their psychological well-being. This book chapter provides a comprehensive review of the literature on the effects of SNSs on child and adolescent psychology, including theoretical perspectives, empirical research, and interventions. The chapter first reviews the major theoretical frameworks that have been used to explain the effects of SNSs on child and adolescent psychology, including social comparison theory, self-esteem theory, and social identity theory. It then summarizes the empirical research on the effects of SNSs on various aspects of child and adolescent psychology, including self-esteem, body image, social skills, academic performance, and mental health. The chapter also provides an overview of the interventions developed to mitigate the potential negative effects of SNSs on child and adolescent psychology.

INTRODUCTION

Social networking sites (SNSs) have become a ubiquitous part of modern society, and children and adolescents are among the most avid users of these platforms (Livingstone & Haddon, 2009). SNSs allow individuals to create profiles, connect with others, and share information in real-time, providing a

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virtual space for social interaction that transcends physical distance and time zones. Despite the potential benefits of SNSs, such as increased social connectedness and self-expression, research has also revealed potential negative consequences, including increased risk for cyberbullying, reduced well-being, and addiction (Burke, Marlow, & Lento, 2010; Kross et al., 2013; Valkenburg & Peter, 2011).

Given the widespread use of SNSs among children and adolescents, it is critical to understand the potential effects of these platforms on their psychological development. This book chapter provides a comprehensive review of the theoretical and empirical literature on the effects of SNSs on child and adolescent psychology, with a focus on the potential risks and protective factors associated with SNS use. We begin by providing an overview of social cognitive theory (SCT) (Bandura, 1986), which serves as a framework for understanding the ways in which SNS use may shape children and adolescents' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors.

Building on this, Behera et al. (2022) examine SNSs' sway over students' psychosomatic health and academic performance. Scrutinizing the impact within the context of COVID-19, their study identifies prevalent platforms, SNSs dependency, and its link to health. The gender-based susceptibility and the substantial connection between SNS usage time and psychosomatic health accentuate the intricate bond between digital engagement and wellness (Behera et al., 2022).

Conversely, Behera and Gartia (2023) emphasize the addictive potential of SNSs and advocate for limiting screen time and comprehending motives to address this challenge in a globalized milieu (Behera & Gartia, 2023). Behera and Gartia (2023) provide pivotal insights in this direction, fostering a better grasp of the intricate interplay between SNSs and university students' psychosomatic health (Behera & Gartia, 2023).

Next, the research on the impact of SNS use on children and adolescents' social, emotional, and cognitive development is reviewed, drawing on empirical studies that have examined the association between SNS use and outcomes such as self-esteem, social support, and academic achievement. The potential negative consequences of SNS use, including cyberbullying, privacy concerns, and addiction, are also discussed. Attention is then turned to the factors that may moderate or mediate the relationship between SNS use and psychological outcomes, including individual differences in personality, gender, and age, as well as contextual factors such as parental monitoring and peer influence.

Finally, potential interventions and best practices for parents, educators, and mental health professionals working with children and adolescents who use SNSs are discussed. These interventions may include strategies for promoting healthy social media use, such as setting limits on screen time, teaching digital literacy skills, and encouraging positive online behavior.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The use of social networking sites (SNSs) has increased dramatically among children and adolescents over the last decade, and research has shown that these platforms can have both positive and negative effects on their psychological well-being. This literature review will examine the existing research on the effects of SNSs on child and adolescent psychology, including both theoretical and empirical studies.

Theoretical models suggest that SNS use may affect children and adolescents' self-esteem, self-concept, and social development. The Social Compensation Theory posits that SNS use may serve as a compensatory mechanism for individuals with low self-esteem or social anxiety, as it allows them to interact with others in a less threatening manner (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). The Social Identity

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