

What effect does social media usage have on adolescents' mental health



Green River College

CMST Communication in Social Media

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The purpose of this research is to see if there's a link between adolescents' mental health in connection to their social media usage. The discussion of how phones and social media impact children's mental well-being has made me curious about its true effects, which has led me to conduct this research. What I hope to study is how the number of hours spent scrolling on social media corresponds with an adolescent's life satisfaction, as well as how the studied population believes social media affects their mood. While reading through the "interpersonal relationships" section of the class textbook, it was mentioned of how social media message boards and confessional blogs can be therapeutic, which could mean that the effect social media has on mental health is determined by how people choose to use it (Orben, A., Dienlin, T., & Przybylski, A. K. 2019). This idea was very new to me and made me curious if social media could actually benefit adolescents. There was also a study I looked into that involved the examination of both SMU intensity and SMU problems when determining if there's a relationship between adolescent's mental health and their social media use (Boer, M., Stevens, G. W. J. M., Finkenauer, C., de Looze, M.,E., & van den Eijnden, R.,J.J.M. 2021). This study was what made me want to conduct my own research to see if SMU intensity alone is detrimental to mental health. I also looked at a large-scale representation data study that took into consideration the social media usage, the participants life satisfaction, and household-level control variables (Orben, A., Dienlin, T., & Przybylski, A. K. 2019).

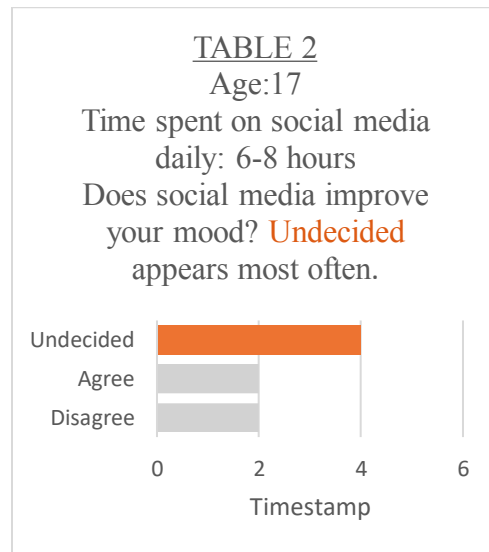
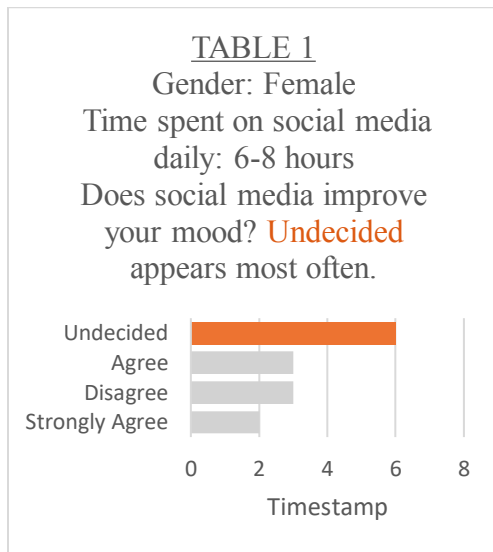
Method

The data collected for this research was from a self-report survey with a set of 6 questions that all participants were required to answer. There was a total of 50 participants, all between the ages of 15-18. 48% of participants were 17 years old, 24% were 18 years old, 24% were 16 years

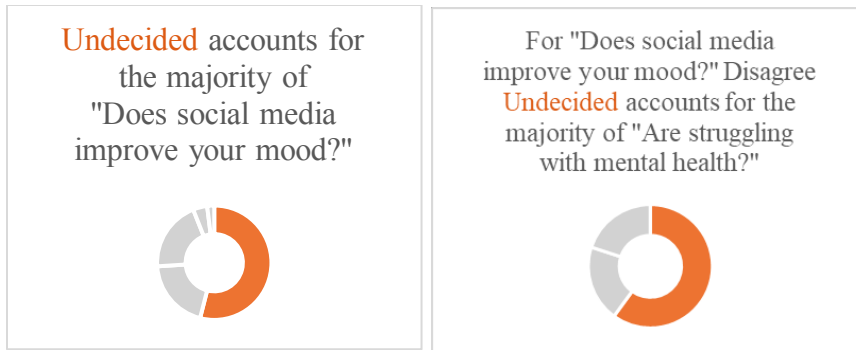
old, and 4% were 15 years old. The genders studied include female, male, and non-binary, as well as the option to select “prefer not to say”. 74% of participants were female, 18% were male, 6% were non-binary, and 2% preferred not to disclose their gender. They were asked questions concerning their level of happiness and life satisfaction in relations to social media. The main purpose of the questions was to understand what emotions the participants associate social media with, and to see if their mental health improves or worsens as a result of their social media usage.

Results

Table 1 and 2 are looking at the most common demographics in age and gender from the sample population, considering the amount of time the participants spend on social media. The trends only lean towards undecided answers that correspond with the participants mental health and time spent on social media. Participants who spend 1-2 hours a day on social media didn't have better or worse mental health than the participants who spend 6-8 hours on social media.



Data for the whole population:



Discussion

The data overall led to inconclusive answers on whether social media social media effects adolescents' mental health in a positive or negative way, The majority of participants were undecided on how social media effects their mood, including the ones struggling with mental health. However, these results correspond with the idea that the way each individual uses social media is involved in how that effects their mood (Humphreys, A. 2016). The results of the two studies used for research also had a similar outcome. I think in order to have achieved better results with more data to examine I should have included questions on the participants households, what purpose social media serves in their life, how they feel before, during and after being on social media, and if they enjoy their time more when it's spent online or offline. This was the first time I've attempted to create, organize, and study a set of data, and it proved to be a much more elaborate process than I anticipated. I did learn from this research project creating tables and surveys as well as compare data, which I've never done before with this many participants. If I study the topic of mental health and social media again this experience will definitely provide a foundation for my research as well as a better understanding of what will lead to conclusive answers.

References

- Boer, M., Stevens, G. W. J. M., Finkenauer, C., de Looze, M.,E., & van den Eijnden, R.,J.J.M. (2021). Social media use intensity, social media use problems, and mental health among adolescents: Investigating directionality and mediating processes. *Computers in Human Behavior, 116*, 1.
- Humphreys, A. (2016). Chapter 6, Uses and benefits of social media. In *Social media: Enduring principles*. Oxford University Press.
- Orben, A., Dienlin, T., & Przybylski, A. K. (2019). Social media's enduring effect on adolescent life satisfaction. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, 116*(21), 10226-10228.