



## The Influence of Parents and Peers on Adolescents' Problematic Social Media Use

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### ABSTRACT

Adolescents' social media use has become a growing concern, particularly regarding its problematic aspects. This study explores the influence of parents and peers on adolescents' problematic social media use through a longitudinal design involving 100 participants aged 11-19 years. Participants completed self-report questionnaires measuring social media behaviors, parental support, and peer influence. Multinomial logistic regression was used to analyze the relationships among these variables. Findings indicate that parental support plays a crucial role in reducing problematic social media use, while higher peer pressure significantly increases the likelihood of excessive engagement. Additionally, education level is negatively correlated with problematic social media use, suggesting that academic engagement serves as a protective factor. Younger adolescents exhibited a higher tendency for problematic use compared to older adolescents. Moreover, family involvement and support were negatively correlated with peer pressure and problematic social media use, emphasizing the importance of family influence. The study highlights the need for interventions that focus on family-based support and peer influence management to mitigate problematic social media behaviors among adolescents. These findings contribute to the broader understanding of risk and protective factors associated with social media use and its psychological impact on adolescents.

**Keywords:-** *Adolescents, Problematic Social Media Use, Parental Support, Peer Influence, Education Level, Family Involvement, Peer Pressure.*

### Introduction

Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat are widely popular among adolescents. While these platforms offer numerous advantages, their overuse has been linked to adverse psychological and behavioral consequences. Research has consistently shown that factors such as parental involvement, peer influence, and self-control significantly impact adolescents' digital habits (van den Eijnden et al., 2018). Understanding how these factors interact can help develop strategies for reducing excessive social media engagement and mitigating its negative effects.

### Theoretical Framework

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Model provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing adolescent behavior within the broader context of their environment. This model emphasizes the interplay between individual and environmental influences across multiple systems: microsystem (family and peers), mesosystem (interactions between microsystems), exosystem (community and media), macrosystem (cultural and societal norms), and chronosystem (changes over time). Applying this framework, this study examines how parental factors, peer influence, and self-control interact to shape adolescents' social media use.

### Parental Involvement and Social Media Use



Parents significantly influence their children's online behaviors, either by providing guidance and supervision or through a lack of involvement. Studies suggest that strong parental bonds reduce the likelihood of problematic internet use (Shin & Ismail, 2014). Adolescents who spend more time with their parents tend to exhibit lower engagement in risk behaviors, including excessive social media consumption (Wartberg et al., 2020).

Parental mediation strategies play a crucial role in regulating social media use. Active mediation, in which parents engage in open discussions about online behavior, has been shown to reduce problematic social media habits. Conversely, restrictive mediation, characterized by setting rigid rules and restrictions, can sometimes backfire, leading adolescents to engage in covert or rebellious internet use (Livingstone et al., 2017). Additionally, parental modeling of responsible digital behavior influences adolescents' self-regulation. Parents who exhibit excessive social media use themselves may inadvertently normalize such behaviors in their children (Coyne et al., 2021).

### **Peer Influence on Social Media Engagement**

Peer relationships play a dominant role in adolescent socialization, often outweighing parental influence in certain aspects. Social media serves as a vital tool for peer interaction, but it also creates pressure to conform to online trends. Research indicates that peer pressure is a major contributor to excessive social media use, particularly among adolescents who seek social validation through digital platforms (Nesi & Prinstein, 2015).

While peer support can serve as a protective factor against risky behaviors, it can also encourage problematic social media engagement. Adolescents who frequently compare themselves to peers on social media platforms are at higher risk of experiencing anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem (Twenge & Campbell, 2018). Furthermore, the fear of missing out (FOMO) has been identified as a key driver of compulsive social media use, as adolescents feel pressured to stay constantly updated on peer activities (Przybylski et al., 2013).

Social media algorithms designed to maximize engagement further compound the influence of peers on digital behaviors. Platforms use predictive algorithms to personalize content, often reinforcing social comparisons and peer-driven behaviors (Beyens et al., 2021). Given these dynamics, interventions aimed at promoting digital literacy and self-awareness among adolescents may help mitigate the negative impact of peer influence on social media consumption.

### **Interactions Between Parental Involvement and Peer Influence**

The interplay between parental involvement, peer influence, and self-control creates a complex web of factors that shape adolescent social media behavior. Research suggests that parental guidance can buffer against negative peer influences, particularly in adolescents with high self-control (Padilla-Walker & Coyne, 2011). Conversely, adolescents with low self-control may be more vulnerable to peer pressure, regardless of parental involvement.

### **Methodology**

This study utilized a longitudinal design, collecting data from 100 adolescents (ages 11-19). Participants completed self-report questionnaires assessing social media behaviors, parental support and peer influence. Multinomial logistic regression was employed to examine the relationships among these variables.

**Statistical Analysis:-**

**Table 1**

The mean (M) and percentages (%) of the total sample for the outcome variable problematic social media use are shown below.

| Variable                     | Total<br>N=100 | Normative<br>N=76 | Risk<br>N=16 | Problematic<br>N=08 |
|------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Age (M)                      | 13.1           | 15.2              | 12.1         | 13.0                |
| Gender (%)                   |                |                   |              |                     |
| Female                       | 52.45          | 29.78             | 16.89        | 5.78                |
| Male                         | 47.55          | 38.69             | 7.06         | 1.89                |
| Education (%)                |                |                   |              |                     |
| Low                          | 28.45          | 15.48             | 9.08         | 3.89                |
| High                         | 71.55          | 49.62             | 15.08        | 6.85                |
| Problematic social media use | 1.29           | 0.88              | 1.96         | 2.77                |

The present study examined the mean age and distribution of gender, education levels, and problematic social media use among a sample of 100 participants. Based on their levels of problematic social media use, the participants were categorized into three groups: normative (N = 76), risk (N = 16), and problematic (N = 8).

The mean age of the total sample was M = 13.1 years, with slight variations across the groups: Normative (M = 15.2), Risk (M = 12.1), and Problematic (M = 13.0). Gender distribution indicated that 52.45% of the total sample were female, with the proportion decreasing across groups (Normative = 29.78%, Risk = 16.89%, Problematic = 5.78%). Male participants comprised 47.55% of the total sample, with a higher representation in the Normative group (38.69%) compared to the Risk (7.06%) and Problematic (1.89%) groups.

Education level analysis revealed that 28.45% of the total sample had a low education level, with the majority belonging to the Normative (15.48%), Risk (9.08%), and Problematic (3.89%) groups. Conversely, 71.55% of the total sample had a high education level, with the highest proportion in the Normative group (49.62%) followed by the Risk (15.08%) and Problematic (6.85%) groups.

Problematic social media use was assessed across groups, with the total sample mean (M = 1.29). A significant increase in problematic social media use was observed in the Risk (M = 1.96) and Problematic (M = 2.77) groups, compared to the Normative group (M = 0.88). These findings suggest that higher problematic social media use is associated with lower educational levels and a lower proportion of female participants.

**Table 2**

Correlations Between Problematic Social Media Use, Age, Gender, Education Level, Time Spent with Parents, Family Support, Peer Support, and Peer Pressure

| Variables                      | 1       | 2       | 3       | 4       | 5       | 6       | 7       | 8       |
|--------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1 Problematic social media use | –       |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 2 Age                          | -.056*  | –       |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 3 Gender                       | .107**  | -.008   | –       |         |         |         |         |         |
| 4 Education level              | -.147** | .209**  | -.032   | –       |         |         |         |         |
| 5 Problematic social media use | .387**  | -.005   | .088**  | -.168** | –       |         |         |         |
| 6 Family support               | -.130** | -.071** | -.026   | .077**  | -.189** | –       |         |         |
| 7 Time spent with parents      | -.006   | .029    | .114**  | .132**  | -.078** | .162**  | –       |         |
| 8 Peer support                 | -.041   | -.005   | .334**  | .008    | -.068** | .087**  | .279**  | –       |
| 9 Peer pressure                | ~       | -.034   | -.160** | -.078** | .281**  | -.069** | -.179** | -.289** |

**Note.** N=100. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between problematic social media use, age, gender, education level, time spent with parents, family support, peer support, and peer pressure among 100 participants.

Problematic social media use was found to have a significant negative correlation with education level ( $r = -0.147$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and family support ( $r = -0.130$ ,  $p < .01$ ), indicating that individuals with higher education levels and greater family support were less likely to engage in problematic social media use. Additionally, problematic social media use showed a significant positive correlation with peer pressure ( $r = 0.281$ ,  $p < .01$ ), suggesting that higher peer pressure is associated with increased problematic social media behaviors.

Age was negatively correlated with problematic social media use ( $r = -0.056$ ,  $p < .05$ ), indicating that younger participants were likelier to report problematic use. Moreover, education level and age were positively correlated ( $r = 0.209$ ,  $p < .01$ ), implying that older participants had higher educational attainment.

Gender was significantly associated with problematic social media use ( $r = 0.107$ ,  $p < .01$ ), suggesting that male participants were more likely to engage in problematic social media use compared to females. Gender also negatively correlated with peer pressure ( $r = -0.160$ ,  $p < .01$ ), indicating that female participants experienced greater peer pressure than males.



Time spent with parents was positively correlated with education level ( $r = 0.132$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and peer support ( $r = 0.279$ ,  $p < .01$ ), suggesting that individuals who spent more time with their parents were more likely to have higher education levels and receive greater peer support.

Family support showed a significant negative correlation with problematic social media use ( $r = -0.130$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and peer pressure ( $r = -0.069$ ,  $p < .01$ ), indicating that greater family support was associated with lower peer pressure and lower problematic social media use.

Overall, these findings highlight the critical role of education, family support, and peer pressure in influencing problematic social media behaviors among adolescents.

### Conclusions:-

- 1) Parental support plays a crucial role in reducing problematic social media use among adolescents.
- 2) Higher peer pressure significantly increases the likelihood of problematic social media behaviors.
- 3) Education level is negatively correlated with problematic social media use, suggesting that academic engagement acts as a protective factor.
- 4) Younger adolescents are more vulnerable to problematic social media use compared to older ones.
- 5) Family involvement and support can help mitigate the negative effects of peer pressure and excessive social media use.

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