Negative Effects of Social Media on Adolescent Behavior from Self-Identity to Interpersonal Relationships Today in France

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to examine social media usage and its consequences among French adolescents. It will build upon a literature review of previous works. In addition, a descriptive-analytical technique (N=150) will confirm my findings. The study was realized in 2022 in the South of France to demonstrate the consequences of social media on adolescents' behavior and selflessness, especially on their mental health, interpersonal skills, and social engagement. Examining the different reasons why social media hold teenagers' attention and focusing on the negative consequences will demonstrate how technology and phones have shaped teenagers' identities. Lastly, it will show how the social interactions of teenagers and their role into adulthood are predetermined through the increased consumption of mass media.

Introduction

With technological expansion, new ways of communication have emerged. The 21st century is rhythmed by one in particular: social media, which has heavily impacted the world's interaction and increased connectedness. To put this in perspective, the very first social media outlet *Six Degrees* in its initial launch in 1997 gathered 3.5 million users at its peak. And by 2021, there were already over 100 social media sites worldwide and 4.2 billion users. This intensity and number has considerably modified societies and individuals, particularly its youngest members by changing habits of socialization. In fact, the monopoly social media now has on the population's attention, has revolutionized communication, allowing people from various countries to exchange and connect at a rate faster than ever. Despite what may be considered progressive development in human communication by some, it remains important that we critically examine the impact of social media on adolescents.

In recent years, social media outlets such as *Meta* have come under public scrutiny due to its impact on adolescents. In particular, a study conducted by Facebook exposed the impact of Instagram on people's lives and demonstrated that teens were more affected by negative experiences with social media than adults (META Group, 2019). Likewise, Instagram is linked to mental health problems and makes body image worse for 1 in 3 teen girls according to the same study. Another original study conducted by Facebook also explained how social media can lead to cyberbullying, body image issues, and social pressure (ibid.). As such, this paper argues that while technological progress has been made in communication, social media also has negative impacts on mental health (i.e., body image), interpersonal skills (i.e., relational communication), and social engagement (i.e., apathy towards community engagement and activism).

Methods

To demonstrate my argument, a literature review contextualizes my topic and reports previous studies about social media's impact on teenagers. In addition, I conducted a survey with a sample size of 150 French adolescents aged between 10 to 19 years. To collect data, I first created an online questionnaire and sent it to various adolescents using a snowball method. In addition, I observed 15 summer camps randomly chosen in the city of Marseille. To increase sample population representation in the sample, data were collected in various neighborhoods to represent all the social classes.

The survey focuses on individuals' different uses of social networks, namely how it changes social interactions. It is built around the three main sections of the research: the impact of social media on mental health, communication skills, and social engagement. The survey questionnaire consisted of 12 questions total with 11 survey questions (e.g. multiple choice out of 3 or 4 answers) and one open-ended question on their choice of social media platform where they spent most of their time.

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the study. Teenagers who answered the questionnaire identified themselves as either male (for a minority) or female (for a majority) and none of them felt other such as transgender, non-binary, or agender. The different age groups that completed the questionnaire are equally represented: 38.2% of adolescents who answered the survey were aged over 16 years old, 31.9% of teenagers were aged below 13 years old, and 29.9% were aged between 13 and 16. Finally, most of the French teenagers who were surveyed affirmed being part of at least one social media, representing 96% of answers, against 6% of adolescents claiming not having any social media.

Table 1. Information on Participants

		Number of adolescents	Percentages
Gender	Male	73	49%
	Female	77	51%
Age	Below 13 years	50	33%
	13 to 16 years	57	38%
	Over 16 years	43	29%
Social Media	User	144	96%
	Non-User	6	4%

Social Media Impact on Mental Health, Interpersonal Skills, and Social Engagement

In France, The "digital generation" is exposed in their early years to social media: around 71% of children aged 12 years are part of social media (Born Social, 2021). Social media usage has become rampant among French teens because it allows them to be part of a community and gives teenagers a digital space where they can be heard (Marine. Ditta, 2016). It provides a way to connect with friends and family (75%) or to watch clips and videos (55%) (Christophe Asselin, 2021).

Many other factors contribute to the increased use of social networks, namely an overconnected society in which we live where the desire to be accepted by peers who have social networks have created the phenomenon of KGOY (Kids Getting Older Younger) by watching older individuals. As such, terms like "addiction"

are associated with the phrase "social networks" because of the obsessive use of these platforms. While SNSs (Social Network Sites) help connect teenagers with their peers virtually, they also have immensely adverse effects on the developing minds of these adolescents. Indeed, social media algorithms know adolescents better than they know themselves by understanding their tastes and interests, which can quickly take over teenagers' lives with their multiple uses like playing games or contacting friends. As a result, there has been a shift from what some have called homo sapiens to "phono-sapiens", in building a digital world where everyone looks perfect (*The Economist*, 2015). By cultivating this illusion of a perfect world, people become detached from reality. Behind screens, they put on a filter and wait for the social approval of positive feedback. However, this can have a negative effect on the personal identity of adolescents. In real life, they cannot hide the truth of who they are because they have flaws which differs from the perfect image projected on social networks. Therefore, it can create depression when they face reality.

A- Mental health

Mental health is a balance between body and mind. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) it is "a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community." (2022). social networks have the opposite effect because, as the following section will demonstrate, it diminishes the body image by incorporating a physical ideal through selfies that contradicts with reality and decreases their self-esteem, thus creating body dysmorphia. In addition, social media's platforms and easy access to it enables cyberbullying because of adolescent's self-assurance while navigating in websites which decreases their self-confidence as well.

Body Dysmorphia

Digital life is a way to escape real-life problems that adolescents might encounter and allow them to show their "dream life". Platforms are challenging because physical appearance is the first aspect that characterizes a person. (Lionel Dany, Michel Morin, 2010). In other words, people will be influenced by what they see, which are photos, and contrast can arise between the truth and self-simulation (Richard Louv, 2005). When adolescents - especially teenage girls- look at other people's appearance, a feeling of pressure from peers who "seek perfection" (McLean Harvard Medical School Affiliate, 2022) emerges. They seek the approval of their followers, which creates a lack of self-confidence as they can no longer judge what is good enough by themselves. With that comes *Snapchat dysphoria*, or the attempt to look like social media filters altering facial features to appear more attractive. Adolescents can build the ideal or best version of themselves since the filter successfully eliminates any flaws. As a result, social media misleads people into believing that beauty equates to perfection, which equates to using a filter.

In France, influencers and TV reality stars -which have an important influence on teenagers- promote the use of cosmetic surgery (Liberation, 2022). An influencer is a person who has a lot of followers on social networks and is thus solicited by brands to sell their products and do business. The ancestors of influencers are TV shoppers : the commercial animators are now the influencers, and the television is now the publication. By buying the sublimated product, teenagers have the illusion of achieving their dream life by looking like a star as at the same time doing business with the promo code. However, the result is not tangible because life of teenagers remains the same even after having the product which result in anxiety and further depression.

A 12-year-old teenager compared social media use to drugs and described it as self-envy (Severine. P, 2020). A 17-year-old girl for example admitted that "there can be a lot of body dysmorphia coming from seeing pictures of models, creating unrealistic expectations for yourself" (Howard Altschiller, Portsmouth Herald, 2022). A Belgium study (Dove Self-esteem project, 2022) found out that girls aged between 13 years old to 15 years old feel 63% uglier than others when they spend more than 2 hours on social media. They also found that 60% of girls aged 13 or older use filters when they take selfies, with 1 out of 4 girls having confidence in

themselves. During an interview, Divya Bamorya, a young teenager, said, "I use filters constantly, and all I think about is, how perfect does my picture look? Does it look similar to something everyone would appreciate?". Her statement highlights the emphasis on self-image. Another example of social media consequence is a 16-years-old girl who lost herself under the pressure of Instagram. In her diary, this teenage girl wrote a letter to society: "You always expect everyone to be up to certain standards," and she said: "My self-esteem along with many others is super low because of you and the image you portray." Social media made her change her habits; namely, she suffered from eating disorders. More than that, some teenagers also talk about "competition." A 14-year-old french girl stated, "It's really become a contest of who's going to be the prettiest, who's going to be the best, who's got the most beautiful course" in a report by Zone Interdite (2022). It's no longer about sharing content, it's about competing for the best presentation of oneself, and from a young age, teens spend more time living and investing in their looks than their personalities.

The direct impacts of social comparison lead to altered behavior, including in diets (weight problems), depression (classic looks), or even suicide (in worst cases). Social media lowers adolescents' self-esteem by increasing social comparison, which mainly affects their self-image. There is a progressive loss of self-fulfillment in favor of others' anxiety and fear of not being happy enough. This clearly shows that social media negatively impacts self-image and amplifies a desire to become a different person. They think that they have to change their body to love themselves instead of adapting and appreciating themselves for who they are in their way. Therefore, a gradual deviation from the first objective of social networks -to create relationships- where adolescents focus on how they want *others* to perceive them instead of being sincere. The desire to maintain their online image is so strong that it also modifies how teenagers see *themselves*, not living up to their friends' expectations. Therefore, teenagers are more likely to become depressed because there is mainly a conceptualization of beauty in society which makes it hard for a young girl that looks different from the social norms of good looks imposed through these platforms. The social norms on the networks can be associated with restaurants, travel, luxury, and other activities that show the best aspect of their life while they are mainly staging. As such, Socially Interactive Technologies (SITs) contribute to teenagers' low self-esteem by presenting a blurred reality.

Cyberbullying

Social media is also affecting mental health by promoting cyberbullying among users. Cyberbullying is "an aggressive, intentional act perpetrated by an individual or group of individuals through electronic forms of communication, repeatedly against a victim who cannot easily defend himself," as defined by the French ministry of education and youth. The term appeared with the development of social media, and the phenomenon continues to grow.

For François Jost (2018), the cause of such hate on social media can also be linked to the influence of TV shows in which people argue, for instance TV reality shows that are strongly present today. Indeed, teenagers live in a society that displays violence all around - in movies, in newspapers, in advertisements - and it gets more pronounced over the years. Thus, violence is normalized, incorporated, and incipiently accepted by the population. Adolescents will begin to suffer from the phenomenon and confront more conflicts in their minds between what they see on Social Networks Sites (SNS) and what is real. It will result in different ways of communication and new behaviors.

In the case of stalkers, another form of cyberbullying, Catherine Blaya (2018) states that they feel safer through social networks because it gives them anonymity. It is indeed impossible to reward or punish people's actions as there is no way to check the authenticity of what is being said - no internet police as an example. Now, stalkers can enjoy a virtual life with a dynamic digital identity that fulfills their urges while keeping their real-life intact. In addition, people harassed are women or are members of the LGTBQIA+ community (Sam

Cook, 2021). This phenomenon indicates that there is sexism and homophobia that comes out through the behaviors of teenagers. It can seriously impact their confidence as they are still at an age where they are searching for their identity and their place in their community, promoting mental illness.

In France, *E-Enfance* and *La Caisse d'Epargne* (*Audirep Institute*, 2021) showed that 20% of kids aged between 8 and 18 in 2021 have already been cyberbullied, with 51% representing girls. A young 13 years old French student cyberbullied said during an interview: "I was alone in front of a mountain, as soon as I reported or blocked accounts, four or five others were created, it was a game for them..." (La Dépêche, 2022). Another French 15-years old teenager committed suicide after being Cyberbullied relentlessly (Ouest France, 2021). These high numbers are due complexities in identity afforded by technology in the 21st century where teenagers can appear as they want, regardless of gender, age, sexual orientation, or ethnicity.

Adolescence marks the "transition from childhood to adulthood" (BJ Casey, Stephanie Duhoux, and Matthew Malter Cohen, 2011). It is a vulnerable age during which young people must make independent decisions while navigating their societal role, with long-term implications. In other words, young adolescents have the possibility of becoming whomever they want. However, the use of social media can negatively change their behaviors as they influence young users by putting pressure on them the way they should appear and promoting hatred through cyber-bullying, which both decrease self-confidence and therefore leads to depression, anxiety, or suicide in worst cases.

Interpersonal skills

Interpersonal communication refers to the sharing of information between two or more individuals as well as the ability to converse, connect, and interact with others. It is also a field of study that aims to comprehend how people employ verbal and nonverbal cues to achieve various relationship and personal objectives. Social networks are a new way to interact with friends and family. However, as a result of the ease of communication made possible by social media, teenagers lose the ability to form true physical bonds. Because people can see and communicate with each other on social networks, they gradually drift apart physically, leading to poor communication skills, such as a decrease in nonverbal communication. SNS also change teenagers' relationships with the development of behavioral issues such as FOMO or social phobia that leads to addiction.

Poor Communication skills
Social media contributes to the poor communication skills of French adolescents, representing a barrier to clear communication. By limiting certain forms of non-verbal exchange, adolescents cannot access their partner's voice intonation or facial expression through text messages. Those could lead to a misunderstanding of social norms, and the consequence could be a non-empathic society that promotes virtualization and minimizes face-to-face interaction.

More than that, fear of being lonely appears over time if a teenager does not conform to a group or stand out. There is a social fear of staying sincere at the risk of being rejected. The "instrumentalization of friendship" (Laurence Corroy, 2019, p14) is a topic that needs to be reevaluated in the study of adolescent behavior : the interface of social media allows teenagers to maintain and prove their friendship by connecting on a daily basis, eliminating the need for them to meet frequently. They can for instance materialize their friendships by constantly talking through Snapchat and developing relationships (Laurence Corroy, 2019, p14) without physical encounter.

Common Sense[1] 2018 study (Victoria Rideout, Michael B. Robb) aimed to reveal adolescents experience on social media with a sample of 1,141 teenagers in the United States. It showed a decrease of almost 20% among people who prefer communicating in person; simultaneously, social media communicants increased and gained 8%. This is a significant shift that reflects how society has evolved in response to social media's rise and acceptance. They claim that by encouraging exchange, they can assist people in developing their social and personal identities, but they enforce behavior. The same study highlighted that 54% admitted to being distracted by social networks without considering the people around them: this shows a strong disconnect from the world through social networks that decrease collaboration and sharing between teenagers in real life.

Adolescents no longer wish to take a role in their personal lives but prefer to interact with their peers through their digital identity, which offers them a more comprehensive range of freedom and choice. Nonetheless, creating an online identity crosses virtual barriers and interferes with adolescents' development. Elisabeth Eglem (2017) discusses the dramatization of it in everyday life, as evidenced by the simulation of a permanently "having fun" image that dominates media platforms. Consequently, people will focus more on posting the moment on these platforms rather than living it.

Social media users engage with the emotions and attachments of their friends in the same way that flight attendants engage in the emotional labor described by Arlie Russell Hochschild's book *The Managed Heart* (2012). Both activities require people to smile, like peers' pictures, and comment positively on posts to make them feel happy and secure about themselves. It is not about agreeing with the feeling expressed but showing and dissimulating using surface acting. Over time, a strong bond forms between the adolescent user and the platforms. This quickly turns into an addictive relationship in which the user ends up conforming to the rules of the social media game as they use it: engagement. From then on, platforms and teenagers connect, adolescents' happiness will then depend on what the application offer. For example, a picture like(s) leads to self-satisfaction and fulfillment – a positive outcome- while ignorance or dislike(s) might induce depression among adolescents. Therefore, to fully assert oneself and display one's happiness, "The price to pay is a virtual omnipotence / real impotence couple" (Thibaut Pannetier, Aziz Essadek, Gérard Shadili, Erès, p. 104).

Teenagers accept the exchange of fulfillment and ensure that they have a strong relationship through daily going on social platforms. They are willing to do anything to maintain their social status, even living in a virtual world. This goes even further, altering their behavior: teenagers prefer to spend time on social media rather than doing other activities.

Addiction

In a hyperconnected society, events happen fast, so there is a need to stay permanently connected and not miss an opportunity to interact with peers and be socially excluded. The brain is constantly solicited for information, which leaves no room for creativity. However, adolescents need it to create and evolve in their community as future adult who would represent the world.

Digital addiction is directly associated with an obsessional-compulsive disorder (OCD) (El Akhaouane Khaoula, Hamadi Chakib, 2021) over which individuals have no control. Basic elements of its development include compulsion or anxiety about being apart from their phone (Elodie Gentina, 2017). Its peak might appear as social phobia, a "long-term and overwhelming fear of social situations" (National Health Service, 2020). With the development of this social anxiety, teenagers will be more likely to fear social situations and everyday activities that involve face-to-face interaction, consequently causing poor social skills, isolation, and suicide in worst cases (Mayo Clinic, 2021).

According to a 2018 report, more than 92% of French teenagers between 12 and 17 possess a smartphone (BVA, 2018). As scholars such as Amy Orben, Livia Tomova, and Sarah-Jayne Blakemore (2020)

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[1] Common Sense is an independent nonprofit organization that aims to create a safe digital world for kids (digital citizenship program) and regularly conduct original researches to identity kids use (research program) according to Common Sense Media webste. https://www.commonsensemedia.org/about-us/our-mission

have shown, this impacts adolescents in several areas of their lives, such as education (with a decrease in school performance), personal feelings (leading to social isolation), and physical (linked to sleep issues or physical activity).

One of the consequences of this dependence is the development of FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) which was first introduced in 2004 in the Harbor Harvard school student book. At its earliest stages, it was a term used to describe a real-world situation- the willingness of people to 'maintain an active social life' (Patrick. J 2004)-. Since then, its meaning has expanded, shifting from a real-life fear to a digital one. It describes a problem of digital dependency that primarily affects young teenagers. Teens are less likely to interact in person, reinforcing their reliance on social media. It quickly becomes a source of anxiety and illness for adolescents who can't live without mobile devices.

According to *The Child Mind Institute*, when adolescents are not doing homework, their attention is focused on social media to text and share content (Rachel Ehmke, 2022). For example, teenagers are also constantly bombarded with notifications that are not always relevant but keep their attention and distract them. Those platforms limit authentic self-expression. A 17-years old adolescent, for example, expresses, "My phone is really important for just practical purposes, and social media is something that everyone at my age is on, so I feel like if you're not on it, you'll be left out of certain things," (Howard Altschiller and Portsmouth Herald, 2022). There is a belief that an active social life is only possible on social media, which does not reflect reality.

Interestingly, Dr. Laurent Karila (2014), a French professor of addictology and psychiatry at the University of Paris-Saclay, compares the use of social media in the contemporary 21st century to a cuddly toy. According to him, teenagers can't live without social networks, much the same way children can not live without their cuddly toys. Just like the child who seeks comfort, social networks are the place to find support and especially the area to confide in one's closest friends. However, unlike the child-toy relationship, social networks allow interaction between friends and oneself, which can have the opposite effect.

More than being a tool, smartphones with social networks can be considered part of a teenager's identity because adolescents create their virtual images and think they are what they reflect in the networks. However, the addiction it leads to also represents a danger to teenagers' interpersonal skills as they face physical and psychological transformation alone.

Adolescents' experience on social media can modify their interpersonal skills because they become accustomed to interact on social networks rather than face to face. It impacts their communication that is virtual and therefore illusory. Moreover, the addiction teenagers develop in parallel prevent them from interacting outside. Their behavior are thus preconditioned by the use of these sites which promote surface friendships, conduct to loss of control, and leads to isolation.

Lack of Social Engagement

The other consequence of social media on adolescents is a lack of genuine interactions. There is a shift from physical spaces of socialization to virtual spaces where adolescents spend most of their time. The other effect is the political apathy that social media breeds, as seen in the rise of clicktivism among young adults, for example.

Physic Space to Virtual Space

Social media has become more than spaces for interaction and entertainment. Boyd (2012) described these platforms as an answer to "the reduction of socialization space." In fact, she explained that adolescents do not depend on mobile phones but on the friendships it allows them to keep. Thereby, the shift from physical public spaces, like in malls, cafes, or parks, to digital spaces, such as Twitter, Facebook, or MySpace, outlines the constant need for adolescents to connect with their peers. 10 years after the publication of *It's Complicated* (Boyd, 2012), social media are still the new public domain where sociability is mainly performed, and cell

phones become best friends of teenagers. Having one is a requirement for teenagers who gradually detach themselves from reality in order to connect with virtuality, where illusion reigns supreme.

It is gradually observed that social networks are paradoxically distancing youth and closing them in bubbles. Teenagers spend less time doing activities outdoors: there is a shift in interest for the new generations, with cell phones being at the center of their life and using it to contact friends, spend their free time, and sleep with them. Thus, their interpersonal relationships are disrupted because they no longer interact with friends or family during social events. Teenagers are more inclined to stay home looking at their phones rather than go outside to engage with nature.

Approximately 90% of students between 13 to 17 years old admitted just passing the time on social media in 2018, according to Pew Research (Monica Anderson, Jingjing Jiang).

Although, a study showed that the natural environment improved adolescents' well-being and mental health during COVID 19 (S. Brent Jackson, 2021), negating the harmful impact of social media on teenagers. By practicing sports, teenagers could also reduce stress and depression (Anna Jolliff, John Torous, and Megan Moreno, 2021).

It is the substitution of the authentic interaction to the virtual interaction that has become the norm with namely the sedentary lifestyle of the new adolescents. Teens are depriving themselves of the natural riches and benefits of spending time outdoors. Although, it could have an important positive effects on the body- by preferring to spend time online rather than in real life.

The change in the place of socialization (now virtual) makes adolescents change their behavior. They no longer interact directly and prefer to stay alone with their phone, feeling that they are with their friends. This reduces their social engagement and outdoor activities (sports, nature), which leads to isolation. Through their intensive use of social media, youth are now also digitally participating in their citizen life by following politicians, movements, or associations.

Civic engagement and activism

Social media impacts teenagers' civic involvement by leading to less participation in everyday life community actions. UNICEF defines civic engagement as "individual or collective actions in which people participate to improve the well-being of communities or society in general." (Alexander Cho, Ph.D., University of California Jasmina Byrne and Zoë Pelter, 2020).

Movements are fueled by interactions and support that occur among common minority cultures worldwide and are driven by exchanges between different regions of the world. The growth of the Black Lives Matter movement in France, for example, directly supports the online launch from the United States and across borders to protect that community. Teenagers feel more concerned about their community with the uprising of their peers, as Greta Thunberg or Malala Yousafzai diffuse and represent a vivid generation of teenagers that take action in their world. The issue that is now encountered is the transience of online movements. Many people follow political causes because it "makes them happier" (Stabroek News, 2013).

Civic engagement can although turn into online activism. The UNICEF analysis of Digital civic engagement by young people admitted that "young people are less invested in 'dutiful' citizenship acts, favoring personalized engagement through digital networking, self-expression, protests, and volunteerism." A study conducted in the North of Isère (France) demonstrated a lack of civic engagement in the community to volunteer as a citizen (le Dauphiné, 2022). This decrease shows a lack of motivation and participation of teenagers as citizens in France.

Bearing in mind that social media introduces teenagers to the concept of politics and environment at an early age, the teens are compelled to turn a social media activism that is meant to be about connection into

the banality of having access without exerting any physical effort. Therefore, if digital civic engagement becomes more popular, it will exacerbate the divide between teenagers with access to the Internet and smartphones and those without it. Consequently, it will make social barriers stronger.

Social media has become an essential element for politicians and interested teenagers since there are always connected. As shown in *The Net Delusion* (Evgeny Morozov, 2011), it is easy to get subscribers quickly but complicated to get followers in real life. Through cyberspace, digital activism can fall into clicktivism, which is an online activism behavior characterized by a low engagement in a petition. Thereby it will create a social loafing and prevent adolescents from taking actual life actions.

Clicktivism is a promising area of study, especially with the development of the curiosity of young adolescents and their gain of information that could gradually turn to the world of politics. A study showed that 64% of social network users in France use networks to get information, especially on Instagram (BDM, 2022). Clicktivism would then represent a simple way for teenagers to adhere to their cause but would still be a less active way to show their participation.

Teen civic engagement also englobes their political life as they enter the world of adults. Social media is leading to an increase in clicktivism. At the same time, no official reports that relate clicktivism and adolescent online activism have yet been released. This phenomenon is considered a form of online engagement that is not sincere.
Therefore, online activism is sometimes not representative of reality and can lead to illusion because people think they are active for their cause when they are not taking action in real life.

Thus, teenagers are going to be less socially engaged in their lives due to the virtualization of their place of socialization and the digitalization of their participation in their lives as citizens. Social networks have indeed become the center of their social engagement, which means that phones have become a necessity for their good balance, no longer allowing them to do other beneficial activities like sports. This will change their behavior negatively by locking them in themselves and the networks can also manipulate them by showing the information they want, which conditions the young generation and controls them unconsciously (with political information display for example).

Results

The results are based on the data collected during the survey carried out in the South of France in Marseille with N=150 participants. Findings were then analyzed using tools such as *Excel*. The survey included 12 questions with three to four possible answers and one open-ended question about the adolescent's favorite social network. The primary goal of the research is to test hypotheses, so questions are directed toward how people use social networks and how they integrate them into their daily lives.

In terms of general information shown in figure 1.1, Snapchat is the most popular social media platform among French adolescents, with 47% users, followed by TikTok (24%), and Instagram (15%). Another popular social media platforms isYouTube (11%).Twitter, Discord, and Pinterest, have although he fewest adherents from the study (1%). Finally, 4% of survey participants did not respond to this question because they do not use social media.
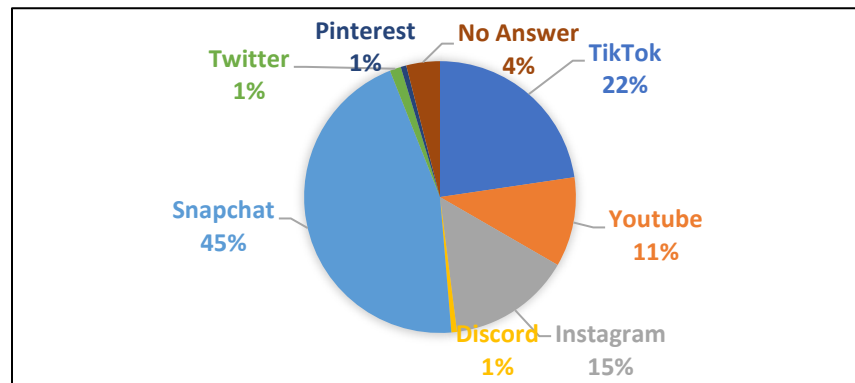
Figure 1. Popular social media among French adolescents in 2022

Figure 1 reveals that most adolescents spend between 2 and 7 hours on social networks (58%), especially those between the ages of 13 to 16 (23%). In contrast, the 13 to 16 age group might contest given that this age group provided the highest percentage of responses to the questionnaire (38%). The table 2 also shows that 14% of the adolescents questioned said they spent more than 7 hours a day on social media, compared to 24% of those who said they spent less than 2 hours. Interestingly, the youngest people are the most likely to have no social networks (3% of those under 13 years old). However, the non-users decrease as adolescents get older (from 1% between 13 and 16 years old to 0% at over 16 years old, where all teenagers are on a platform). Moreover, in the over 16 group category, there are as many adolescents (5%) passive (staying less than 2 hours per day) as active (more than 7 hours per day). According to this analysis, French teenagers understand how to maintain control of these platforms.

Table 2. Time adolescents spend on social media according to their age

	below 13 years	**13 to 16 years**	**Over 16 years**	**Total**
Below 2 hours	9%	10%	5%	24%
2 to7 hours	16%	23%	19%	58%
Over 7 hours	5%	4%	5%	14%
No Answer	3%	1%	0%	4%
Total	33%	38%	29%	100%

In terms of mental health, the survey questioned teenagers on how they feel when they see a beautiful person on social media. There were three possible responses: happy for the person, a little jealous, or neutral. The results revealed that social media has no effect on a minority of teens (28%), compared to 72% for whom social media has changed their emotions (51% are happy and 21% are a little jealous).
Among the responses related to mental health, this study showed a link between the jealousy generated by social networks and the repetitive use of these platforms.

As shown in Figure 2, 43% of the adolescents who claim to be jealous on social networks post content at least once a day, and 40% once a week. Thus, only a minority of youth (17%) are jealous and post images

monthly. These findings highlight how using social media increases the likelihood that young people will be jealous, lowering their self-esteem and mental health.
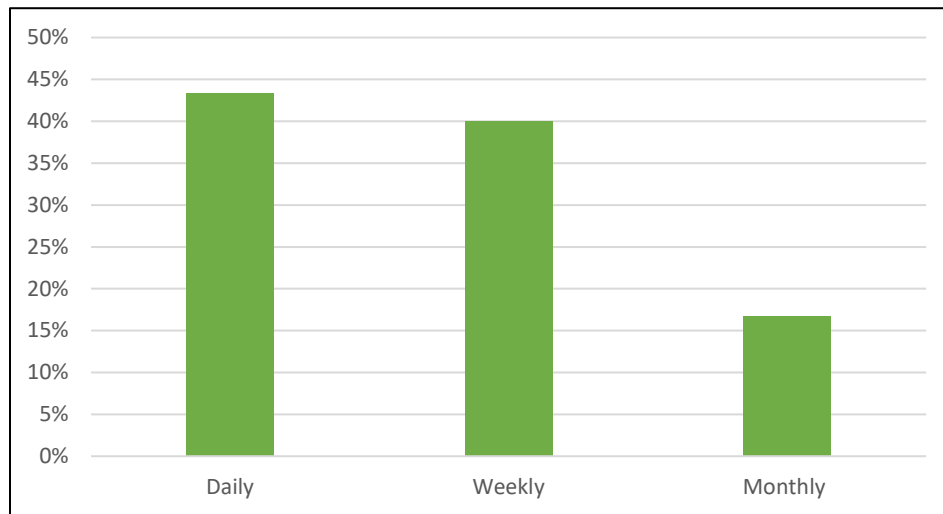

Figure 2. Percentage of teenagers feeling "a bit jealous" on social media depending on Post frequency in 2022

Adolescents were questioned about their use of social media in the area of the survey that dealt with interpersonal interactions. They were asked if these platforms had helped them meet more people, if they had ever used them to say something they didn't mean, and if they were addicted to it. Regarding addiction, the survey asked users explicitly if they considered themselves addicted to social media. This research has shown that the majority of adolescents who use social media are addicted to these platforms (53%) as shown figure 3.
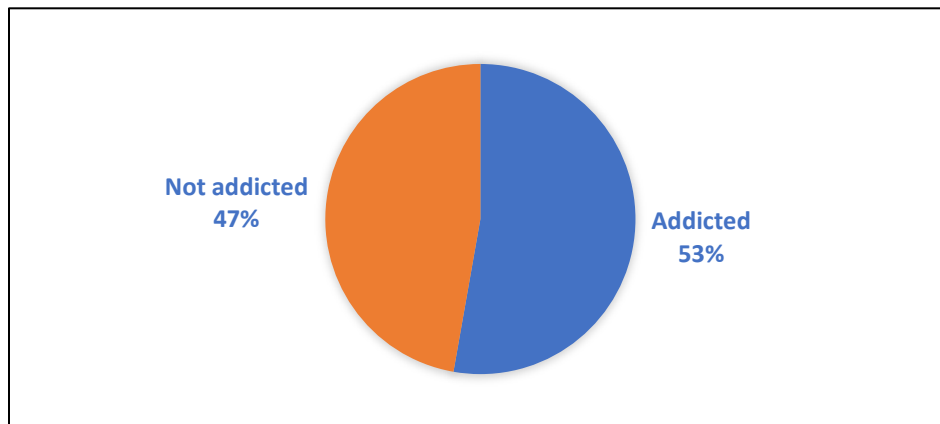

Figure 3. French teenagers' self-reported addiction to social media in 2022

However, this research highlights a link between addiction to social networks and the interpersonal relationships that social networks generate in adolescents (figure 4). It demonstrates that young people's addiction to interpersonal contact with one another also influences their addiction to social networks. In fact, most of the young people for whom social networks have allowed them to meet new people or maintain

relationships are also addicted to social networks, representing 31% of the responses. On the other hand, 26% of those who claim that social networks have not affected their interpersonal connections claim that they are not addicted to them.
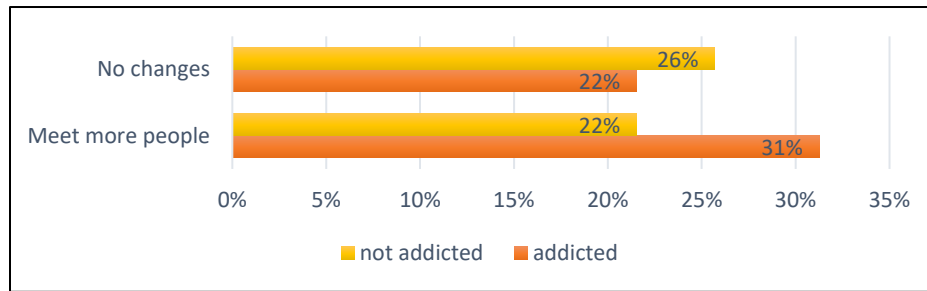

Figure 4. Impacts of social media on social relationships in France in 2022

As illustrated in Figure 5, most teens who claim they "often" say things on social media that they would not say in real life have also met more people and social media helped them to maintain their social relationships.
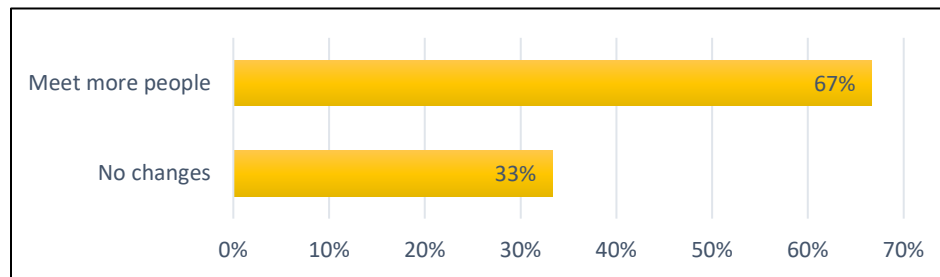

Figure 5. Authenticity of teenagers and their social relationship on social media in 2022

Finally, the questionnaire inquired about three major points in terms of social engagement: the outdoor activities that teenagers engaged in when they were not on social networks, whether they were members of an association, and whether they were concerned about socio-political issues and acted on social networks, for example, by belonging to an association or a movement. There were four options for outdoor activities: spending time with family and friends, participating in sports, reading, or doing something else (they had to fill in the box). Most teens answered spending time with family and friends (54%), playing sports (25%), and reading (8%). Video game playing (3%), sketching (2%), and sleeping (2%) were some of the more frequent replies in the "other" category (figure 6).
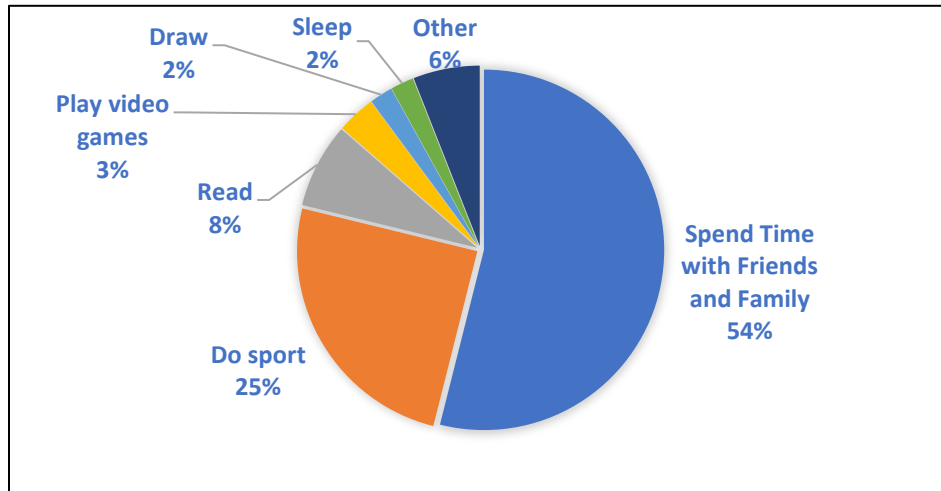
Figure 6. Activities of French teenagers outside of social media in 2022

The study found that 67% of teenagers were not members of any organization in their daily lives.
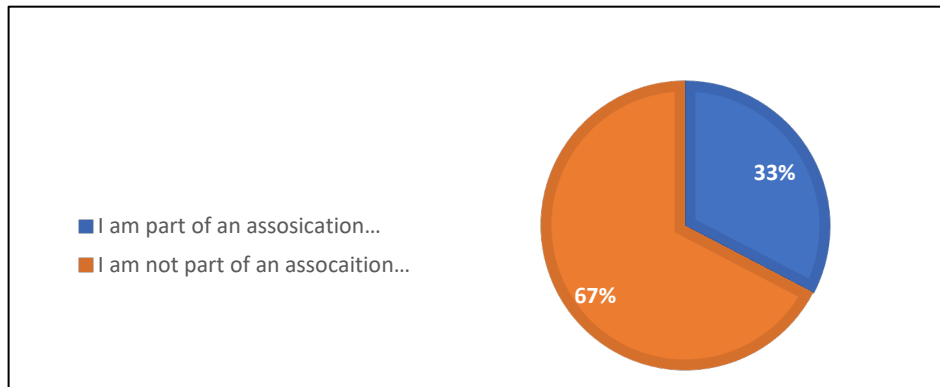

Figure 7. Membership of adolescence in association

When asked if they were concerned about social media association, 51% said no, and 32% said it had no bearing on their online political life. It reveals that most (82%) teenagers do not engage in online activism.
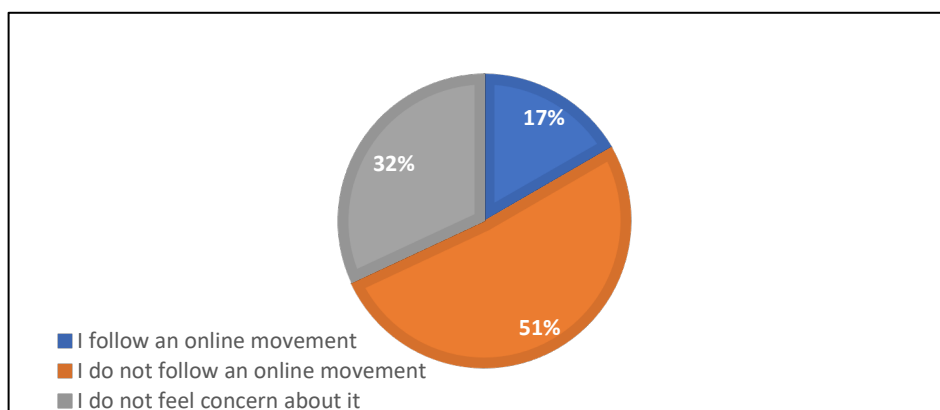
Figure 8. Adolescents 'engagement in online movements and activism

Discussion

Of the 150 adolescents' answers, 144 people affirmed having at least one account on social media, which means that social networks are highly present in France among adolescents between 10 and 19 years old. The responses also showed that social media impacts teenagers' mental health: 72.2% of teenagers react to online pictures. The engagement of teenagers on social networks to post contents often is related to their mental health since they are more jealous according to the results Therefore, as stated earlier, spending a lot of time on social networks causes jealousy since people show a perfect image, pushing other users to do the same, which reduces self-esteem, increases stress and causes depression.

Moreover, teenagers should not rely on social networks because during this analysis, it was observed that the more they meet new people, the more comfortable they will be and the more they will allow themselves to say things that they would not dare in real life, which also contributes to the increase of false interactions and can lead to hatred or sadness.

French teenagers are addicted to social media, as figure 3.1 showed. 31.3% of adolescents use social media to connect with other teenagers and meet new people. They use digital devices to strengthen social relationships and integrate new communication skills, which change their interactions and decrease face to face exchange. The second hypothesis is then valid because more teenagers use social media to connect with friends and family online. This study also showed that teenagers like to interact with each other since they spend time with their families or friends mostly when they are not on the networks. A certain maintenance of physical relationships that allows to keep the direct exchange.

Regarding social engagement, only 33% of adolescents belong to a real-life association, compared to 17% who follow a movement or association on social media and are concerned about political issues. It confirms our third hypothesis that adolescents in France lack social engagement in both real and online life. Indeed, 32% affirmed not being concerned, which offers a refund disinterest in politics even though it will be part of their actions as French citizens. It also emphasizes that teenagers do not participate in clicktivism since they are mostly not active online. Above all, there is a real lack of social life and activities around the adolescents to the benefit of social networks which are at the center of exchanges as shown generally by the results of the study and the literature review.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have examined the impacts of social media on French teenagers' identity and behavior. My data shows some positive effects of social media on adolescents, such as broadening social networks and communication pathways or allowing adolescents to communicate anytime they need. However, they are still negative aspects that we need to pay more attention to, like addiction, low esteem, or even less communal participation. In its current form, social media does not help develop teenagers' identity and interpersonal skills and should be limited. However, given the immense popularity and presence of social networking sites in today's global market, it is hard to imagine that these sites will be shortening in scope soon. Thus, taking a more critical look at these platforms can help foster discussion about creating a more favorable environment for adolescents.

Acknowledgments

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