

Discussion

Name of Student

Institutional Affiliation

## 5-1 Discussion

The adolescent years are a critical period marked by significant physical and psychological changes that directly impact behaviors and emotional responses. These changes are compounded by modern phenomena like social media, which has become a ubiquitous presence influencing adolescent development in complex ways.

During adolescence, the brain undergoes substantial development, particularly in the prefrontal cortex, the area responsible for decision-making, impulse control, and reasoning. The development continues into young adulthood, which explains some of the hallmark behaviors associated with adolescence, such as emotional intensity and risk-taking. The limbic system, which processes emotions, develops ahead of the prefrontal cortex, leading to heightened emotional responses and a propensity for riskier behaviors due to an underdeveloped capacity for regulating these responses. Moreover, puberty brings about hormonal changes that further complicate these neural developments. These hormonal influences can exacerbate moodiness and emotional unpredictability, traits commonly stereotyped in adolescents. The ongoing maturation of the brain, coupled with these hormonal shifts, lays a biological foundation for the erratic and exploratory behaviors often observed during this developmental stage.

Social media introduces an additional layer of complexity to adolescent development. Platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook significantly affect how adolescents perceive themselves and interact with the world. The constant feedback loop provided by social media—through likes, comments, and shares—can become a source of validation and reinforcement that is intensely compelling at a stage where peer approval is highly valued (Roberts, 2014). Digital engagement also comes with risks. The pursuit of peer approval can lead to risk-taking behaviors, such as oversharing personal information, engaging in online challenges, or mimicking unhealthy behaviors popularized by influencers or celebrities. The

addictive nature of social media interactions can exacerbate these behaviors, as teens may prioritize online engagement over real-world consequences. Furthermore, the accessibility of social media means that teens are not only consumers but also broadcasters of content, often without the maturity to foresee the long-term impacts of their digital footprints. The dynamic can profoundly influence their social and emotional development, sometimes leading to anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues when online interactions become negative or overwhelming.

Navigating adolescence in the age of social media requires active involvement and guidance from both parents and the larger community. Parents can play a pivotal role by fostering open communications about online behavior and its implications. Setting boundaries on the use of digital devices while also respecting adolescents' growing need for autonomy can help manage their exposure to potential online risks. Educators and community leaders can also contribute by providing programs that educate teens about the responsible use of technology and the importance of maintaining a healthy digital identity. Schools could integrate digital literacy into their curricula to teach students about the benefits and dangers of social media from an informed perspective. Additionally, mental health resources should be readily available to address any negative impacts of social media usage. These resources can offer strategies to cope with cyberbullying, social anxiety, and other related issues, ensuring that adolescents have the support they need to navigate these challenges effectively.

### References

Roberts, K. (2014, February 26). The psychology of begging to be followed on X (formerly Twitter). The Atlantic.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2014/02/the-psychology-of-begging-to-be-followed-on-twitter/283947/>

### Peer Reply

Hi Erica,

You have made excellent points about the complexities influencing adolescent behavior, especially highlighting the role of social media. I would like to expand on the factors impacting adolescents' risk-taking behaviors and suggest additional strategies for parental guidance during this critical period.

Adolescents' risk-taking behaviors are not solely influenced by their biological development and social media interactions. Peer influence plays a substantial role during this developmental stage. Research indicates that adolescents are more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviors when they are in the presence of peers than when alone (Defoe et al., 2020). The susceptibility is partly due to the heightened sensitivity to social acceptance during adolescence, which is exacerbated by the social dynamics facilitated by digital platforms.

Environmental factors also contribute significantly. Adolescents raised in environments with high levels of parental monitoring, clear rules, and warm, supportive relationships are less likely to engage in high-risk behaviors. In contrast, those who experience neglectful parenting or inconsistent discipline may seek acceptance and guidance through external, sometimes unreliable, sources, including social media platforms.

To guide adolescents effectively, parents can adopt an approach that balances supervision with respect for the adolescent's growing need for autonomy. Open communication is critical; parents should discuss the reasons behind rules and the potential consequences of risky behaviors, making these discussions an ongoing conversation rather than a one-time lecture. Additionally, encouraging adolescents to engage in extracurricular

activities can provide them with a sense of community and accomplishment, reducing the time spent online and the influence of potentially harmful peer interactions.

Parents can also foster resilience by helping adolescents develop problem-solving skills and emotional regulation strategies. It can be facilitated through modeling behavior, discussing hypothetical scenarios, and encouraging reflection on the consequences of different choices.

## References

- Defoe, I. N., Dubas, J. S., Dalmaijer, E. S., & Van Aken, M. A. G. (2020). Is the Peer Presence Effect on Heightened Adolescent Risky Decision-Making only Present in Males? *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *49*(3), 693–705.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-019-01179-9>