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Annotated Draft

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Social Media and Teen Identity: An Exploration of Benefits, Challenges, and Overall Implications

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Introduction to Writing

Prof. Jones Christopher

April 5, 2026

Social Media and Teen Identity: An Exploration of Benefits, Challenges, and Overall Implications

In today's modern world, social media has become one of the most important aspects of teenage life. **[This opening is broad and generalized. Starting with a concrete moment, statistic, or observation would create a stronger, more human entry point.]**

What is one real situation that illustrates how central social media is for teens?] This is because social media platforms are widely used by teenagers for many different purposes, and these purposes often influence how they think, feel, and behave. **[“Many different purposes” and “think, feel, and behave” are vague. You might want to name 2–3 specific behaviors to make this more human and precise. What actual behaviors could you highlight to replace the general phrasing? Of course, considering you’ll revise your opening statement, be sure to also adjust the way you’ll present this information to make your thoughts cohesive.]**

As a result, social media plays a significant role in shaping teenage identity. **[This repeats the previous idea without adding depth. You could combine it with the previous sentence or expand it with a more specific insight into how social media influences teenage identity.]**

Understanding this topic is very important because social media continues to grow every year, and teenagers are using it more than ever before (Pew Research Center, 2023). **[Phrases like “very important” and**

“more than ever before” sound vague and generic, another AI marker. To improve this, you could clarify *why* this growth matters to identity formation among teens. What is at stake for teens? Also, your citation appears plausible, but the phrasing in the sentence (“more than ever before”) may not directly match the source. AI-generated writing often pairs generic claims with citations that don’t clearly support them. Consider checking whether the source actually states this trend. If not, revise the claim or replace it with a statistic you can verify.]

The purpose of this paper is to explore the various ways that social media affects teenagers and their identities. This paper will argue that social media has both positive and negative effects on teen identity, and that these effects are complex, multifaceted, and constantly evolving. [The triad “complex, multifaceted, constantly evolving” is abstract. Replace with a specific tension, such as the contrast between self-expression and pressure to perform, to strengthen the thesis. What is one contradiction you’ve noticed that could replace the abstract wording?] By looking at research studies, examples, and general observations, this paper will show that social media is neither entirely good nor entirely bad, but rather a tool that can shape identity in many different ways depending on how it is used (Smith, 2022). [The “neither good nor bad” framing can be considered a classic AI default because it avoids taking a stance. Human writers tend to articulate a more pointed or original claim, so you might want

to do that here in your current thesis unless otherwise instructed by your professor.

What is your stance or opinion about how social media shapes identity considering both its positive and negative effects? For instance, do you believe teens' early exposure to social media is just right or not, or do you have something else in mind?]

The Increasing Role of Social Media in Teen Life

Social media has become extremely popular among teenagers in recent years. According to many studies, a large percentage of teens use social media every single day (Pew Research Center, 2023). This shows that social media is not just a casual activity but a major part of their daily routines. Because of this, social media has a strong influence on how teens see themselves and how they interact with others. [This repeats earlier claims without adding new insight, so readers might get confused about the deeper purpose of this information. Adding a concrete example (e.g., checking notifications before school) of how social media has become part of teens' daily routines would make this more grounded and meaningful.]

One reason social media is so influential is because it provides constant access to information, entertainment, and communication. [List-like phrasing feels generic, especially if it uses vague descriptions. A specific moment or behavior would make your point clearer for readers. What is one example of a teen using social media in a way that illustrates access to information, entertainment, and communication? I

suggest you illustrate how these three are accessed by teenagers these days and how they impact their daily lives.] Teenagers can use social media at any time of the day, which means they are always connected to the online world. This constant connection can shape their thoughts and behaviors in ways that are sometimes obvious and sometimes subtle. For example, when teens scroll through their feeds, they are exposed to images, videos, and messages that can influence their opinions and beliefs (Turner & Hayes, 2021). **[Try elaborating on this example to add more depth to your discussion. How exactly does teens' exposure to certain images, videos, and messages influence their perspective on certain things?]**

Another important factor is the design of social media platforms. Many platforms use algorithms that show users content based on their interests. This means that teens often see content that reinforces what they already like or believe. **[This repeats earlier algorithm content almost verbatim. Consolidating or adding a new angle, such as how algorithms shape trends or reinforce insecurities, would strengthen the paragraph.]** While this can make social media enjoyable, it can also limit exposure to new ideas. As a result, teens may develop identities that are shaped by repetitive content rather than diverse experiences (Zhang & Moreno, 2022). **["Repetitive content" is abstract. Add a specific example of a narrowed feed would clarify the point. What is one example of a narrowed feed that illustrates this idea?]**

Identity Formation During Adolescence

Identity formation is a very important developmental stage for teenagers. During this time, teens try to figure out who they are, what they believe, and how they want to present themselves to the world. **[Definition-style opening is a common AI pattern. Starting with a specific moment of identity exploration would feel more human. What concrete example could you use to illustrate this stage?]** Traditionally, this process happened through real-life interactions with family, friends, and communities. However, in the modern era, social media has become a major space where identity formation occurs (Smith, 2022).

Social media allows teens to experiment with different versions of themselves. For example, they can post pictures, share opinions, and express interests that reflect how they want others to see them. **[These examples, although relevant, can still be improved. Consider making your examples more specific to clarify how social media provides room for self-exploration and self-expression. For instance, in what ways do teens use social media to explore their identities or personalities? You might want to also be more specific with how they “experiment” through social media.]** This can be helpful because it gives teens a chance to explore their identities in a flexible and creative way. However, it can also be challenging because teens may feel pressure to present themselves in ways that are not authentic (Turner & Hayes, 2021).

Another important point is that social media creates a large and sometimes unpredictable audience. Teens may worry about how many likes or comments they receive, which can affect their self-esteem. This can lead to what some researchers call “performative identity,” where teens focus more on how they appear online than on who they truly are (Smith, 2022). **[This repeats earlier ideas without further insight, making the discussion sound redundant. I suggest you deepen the explanation by adding a platform-specific example or describing how audience size affects behavior and even self-perception.]** Over time, this can make it difficult for teens to develop a stable sense of self. **[This insight can also be further elaborated to add depth to your discussion. What, then, are the possible repercussions of having an unstable or inauthentic sense of self?]**

Positive Effects of Social Media on Teen Identity

Increased Opportunities for Self-Expression

One of the main benefits of social media is that it allows teens to express themselves in creative ways. They can share art, music, writing, and personal stories. **[This is another generic list that could be flagged as AI-sounding. You might want to a specific example of a teen creator or type of content to better demonstrate how social media becomes an outlet of creativity to some.]** This can help them discover their talents and build confidence. For example, many teens use platforms like TikTok to

showcase their creativity, which can lead to positive feedback and personal growth (Williams, 2020). **[This citation may be invented or overly convenient. When a citation is used to support a broad or obvious claim, it can signal AI generation. Ask yourself: Does this source actually exist? Does it specifically discuss this idea? If not, consider replacing it with a real study or removing the citation and expanding your explanation.]**

Access to Supportive Communities

Social media provides access to communities that teens may not find in their offline lives. These communities can offer support, encouragement, and understanding. **[This paragraph mirrors the structure of the previous one almost exactly, and being repetitive is a common AI marker. Varying the structure, perhaps starting with a story, would make it feel less formulaic.]** This is especially important for teens who feel isolated or misunderstood. For example, LGBTQ+ teens often find supportive groups online that help them feel accepted (Williams, 2020).

Exposure to Educational Content

Another benefit is that social media exposes teens to educational content. Many creators share information about science, history, mental health, and other important topics. **[This explanation is also generic. Try referring to a specific and known creator or type of educational series that showcase these types of information so you can expound this general claim.]** This can help teens learn new things and develop a broader

understanding of the world (Smith, 2022). For example, short educational videos can make complex topics easier to understand.

Opportunities for Activism and Leadership

Social media also gives teens opportunities to participate in activism. They can share information about social issues, organize events, and raise awareness. **[Predictable structure. Introducing a specific youth-led movement or moment would humanize this. What is one example of teen activism you could mention?]** This can help them develop leadership skills and a sense of purpose (Williams, 2020). Many teens use social media to advocate for causes they care about, which can strengthen their identities.

Negative Effects of Social Media on Teen Identity

Social Comparison and Low Self-Esteem

One major issue is social comparison. Teens often compare themselves to others on social media, especially when they see idealized images. This can lead to feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem (Turner & Hayes, 2021). **[This claim may be believable but predictable. Adding a specific example of a comparison spiral or platform feature would deepen the point.]** Because social media often shows only the best moments of people's lives, teens may feel like they are not good enough.

Pressure to Maintain a Certain Image

Another challenge is the pressure to maintain a certain image online. Teens may feel like they need to look perfect or act a certain way to gain approval. This can lead to stress and anxiety. **[This repeats earlier ideas. Adding a new angle, like the urge to use filters, editing apps, “photo dumps,” would add depth to your point about the challenge posed by social media use. Also consider elaborating on how this kind of pressure to keep their image online exactly affects teens’ mental health. How do stress and anxiety manifest in their lives because of such pressure, for example?] Over time, this pressure can make teens feel disconnected from their true selves (Smith, 2022). [How do you interpret this? Try explaining that “disconnect” further in order to clarify why the pressure to maintain an “online image” is a real problem.]**

Influence of Algorithms

Algorithms can also influence teen identity. When teens interact with certain types of content, the algorithm shows them more of the same. This can create a narrow view of the world. For example, if a teen watches fitness videos, they may start seeing more content about dieting, which can affect their body image (Zhang & Moreno, 2022).

[Repeats earlier algorithm discussion almost verbatim. Consider consolidating or adding a platform-specific example or further examples of how repeated content limits or negatively affects teens’ identity formation.]

Cyberbullying and Negative Interactions

Cyberbullying is another serious issue. Teens may experience negative comments or harassment online, which can harm their mental health (Turner & Hayes, 2021). **[This idea seems accurate but surface-level. Adding a specific scenario or emotional impact would strengthen the point. What is one example of a cyberbullying situation and its impact you could describe?]** Because online interactions can feel anonymous, people may say hurtful things they would not say in person.

Privacy Concerns

Finally, social media can lead to privacy issues. Teens may share personal information without realizing the consequences. Once something is posted online, it can be difficult to remove. This can affect their identity in the long term (Williams, 2020). **[“Personal information” is vague. What is one specific example, like posting location data or oversharing in a story, that you could include to clarify the point? Then, in what way/s can that exactly affect identify information?]**

Case Studies and Examples

Case Study 1: The Aspiring Influencer

A teenager began posting fashion content on Instagram. At first, it was fun, but over time, she felt pressure to post more often and look perfect. She started comparing herself to other influencers and became stressed. This shows how social media can shift from a

creative outlet to a source of anxiety (Turner & Hayes, 2021). **[This case study is very general, and the descriptions appear shallow. Thus, readers might not appreciate its deeper relevance to the influence of social media on teen identity. Consider adding more specific details. Becoming “stressed” is too general. How did her stress manifest? What concrete effects had she experienced when she started comparing herself to others?]**

Case Study 2: The Online Activist

Another teen used social media to raise awareness about climate change. He connected with other activists and organized events. **[Still generic. What kinds of events did they organize? Also, what kind of connection or relationship was he able to develop through social media? Adding these specific details would make this example more meaningful.]** This helped him develop leadership skills and a strong sense of identity (Williams, 2020).

Case Study 3: The Isolated Teen

A teen who felt lonely at school found supportive communities online. These communities helped her feel understood, but she also encountered negative content. **[“Negative content” seems rather vague and very general. Naming the type of content or conflict would make this more concrete.]** This example shows the mixed effects of online communities (Smith, 2022).

Strategies for Supporting Healthy Identity Development

Teaching Media Literacy

Media literacy can help teens understand how social media works. This includes recognizing unrealistic images and understanding how algorithms influence content (Zhang & Moreno, 2022). **[What can teens benefit from this exactly? Consider elaborating on the direct impact of these examples to strengthen the purpose of this strategy.]**

Encouraging Offline Activities

Encouraging teens to participate in offline activities can help them develop a balanced identity. Hobbies, sports, and face-to-face interactions are important for healthy development (Smith, 2022). **[This idea is also still vague. By “healthy development,” what do you mean? Consider elaborating on this to add depth to this strategy.]**

Setting Healthy Boundaries

Setting boundaries around social media use can reduce stress. For example, taking breaks or limiting screen time can help teens stay grounded (Turner & Hayes, 2021). **[This part will also benefit from further insight. Staying “grounded” is just too broad, so readers might not fully grasp the significance of the boundary you mentioned. What does that exactly mean in the context of identity formation among teens? Also, aside**

from breaks or limiting screen time, what other healthy boundaries could there be, and how can they help build a more stable identity?]

Promoting Open Communication

Parents and educators should encourage open conversations about social media.

[Adding a specific conversation starter or scenario would make this more concrete.

For instance, what timely topic related to social media can parents or educators open up?] This can help teens feel supported and understood (Williams, 2020).

Highlighting Positive Role Models

Introducing teens to positive role models online can help counteract negative influences (Smith, 2022). [This part will benefit from further details. Naming an example of a positive role model or type of content would deepen the point here. Additionally, you can also consider explaining how exactly having a positive model can counteract the negative influences throughout social media.]

Conclusion

In conclusion, social media has a significant impact on teenage identity. It offers many benefits, such as self-expression, community, and learning. However, it also presents challenges, including social comparison, pressure to perform, and algorithmic influence. Because of these complexities, it is important to help teens use social media in

healthy and responsible ways. By understanding both the positive and negative effects, we can support teens as they navigate the digital world and develop strong, authentic identities. {This conclusion seems rather overly neutral, so you might want to improve it by taking a more definite stance. After exploring the benefits of and challenges posed by social media on identity formation, overall, what can you infer about teens' exposure to it? By "support," for instance, what do you exactly mean? What kind of it do you believe must be extended to teenagers these days?}

References [APA requires the Reference page to be a separate page, so make sure to also refer to APA guidelines carefully.]

Pew Research Center. (2023). *Teens, social media, and technology: 2023 update*. Pew Research Center.

Smith, J. A. (2022). *Adolescent identity development in digital spaces*. *Journal of Youth Psychology*, 14(2), 113–129.

Turner, L. M., & Hayes, R. (2021). Social comparison and self-esteem among teenage social media users. *Journal of Adolescent Behavior*, 9(3), 45–59.

Williams, K. R. (2020). Online communities and belonging: A study of marginalized youth. *Digital Sociology Review*, 5(1), 77–94. [The journal title and volume/issue numbers

look realistic but may be fabricated. AI systems frequently generate journal names that sound academic but do not exist. Verify whether this journal is real. If not, replace the citation with a credible source or revise the information to rely on your own analysis.]

Zhang, P., & Moreno, M. (2022). Algorithmic influence and teen mental health: A review of emerging research. *Media & Society*, 18(4), 201–219.

Summary of Recommendations

Hello, Andy! I'm Ronald F. Thank you for submitting your paper about Social Media and Teen Identity. As I understand it, you're writing a research paper on the overall influence of social media on identity formation among teens and the larger implications. Let's begin working towards a better paper!

Revision Checklist on Composition

- Create a more concrete opening statement in your introduction.
- Express a clearer stance on social media's influence on teen identity in your thesis considering its benefits and challenges.
- Provide specific, concrete examples of the benefits of and challenges posed by social media use to address very broad and generic claims. Try naming specific behaviors, examples, or scenarios instead of general phrases like "many purposes" or "influences how teens think." Also, consider introducing platform-specific details, observations, or moments that feel lived rather than generalized.
- Reduce repeated ideas by combining overlapping points or deepening the analysis with new angles and insights: Consider combining paragraphs that make similar points, introducing a new dimension each time you revisit a theme (e.g., emotional impact, platform differences, social context), and checking for repeated sentence structures and rephrasing them.
- Incorporate sensory detail, paraphrased quotes, or brief anecdotes in the case studies to make them more meaningful and authentic: The case studies are helpful but feel generic. Adding specificity will make them more credible. Of course, make sure they are not fabricated to begin with.
- Provide a more definite stance on social media's influence on teens' identity formation in your conclusion.

Revision Checklist on AI Usage

- Vary paragraph openings to avoid predictable, template-like structures: Many paragraphs begin with the same structure (“One reason...,” “Another benefit...,” “Another challenge...”). This creates a predictable rhythm that sounds AI-generated. Try starting with a short anecdote, observation, or surprising fact *where applicable*; using a question, contrast, or vivid detail to open a paragraph; or mixing long and short sentences to create a more natural flow.
- Replace abstract adjectives (“complex,” “multifaceted,” “important”) with precise descriptions or real scenarios
- Verify all citations and replace any that are dubious: Some citations in your draft appear generic, overly convenient, or possibly fabricated, which is a common AI marker. Citations should always refer to real, verifiable sources that directly support your claims. Try doing the following:
 - Checking whether each source actually exists
 - Confirming that the source supports the exact idea you’re citing
 - Replacing invented or unverifiable citations with credible ones
 - Removing citations when the idea is your own reasoning
 - Using library databases, Google Scholar, or your institution’s resources to find real studies

The embedded comments throughout the essay highlight exactly where these revisions can be applied. Please make all changes to your own original file to maintain your intended formatting, headers, and footers.

If you would like a review of your revised draft, please feel free to [resubmit](#) your paper to the Writing Lab.

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Helpful Links

Please use these official Style Guides for information on citation formatting:

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- **MLA Style:**
<https://style.mla.org/>
- **Chicago Style:**
https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html