

THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE ON THE MORAL DEVELOPMENT OF ADOLESCENTS: PARENTS' PERCEPTION

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, social media has become an integral part of daily life, particularly among adolescents. With approximately 4.48 billion active users globally, its pervasive influence extends into various aspects of life, including the moral development of young individuals. The rapid adoption of social media in Sri Lanka has prompted concerns about its effects on the youth. This study focuses on parents' perceptions of the impact of social media on the moral development of adolescents in the Anuradhapura district, Sri Lanka, a region where such research is notably scarce. The investigation aimed to understand the nuanced ways in which social media usage, including frequency, duration, addiction symptoms, and social comparison, affects the moral development of adolescents. To achieve the proposed research objectives, a quantitative research method was adopted and data were gathered through self-administered structured questionnaires. The study involved parents of 384 teenagers in the Anuradhapura district of Sri Lanka, using a convenience sampling technique. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS, employing basic descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and stepwise regression tests to examine social media usage and its impact on the moral development of adolescents from parents' perspectives. Consequently, the findings revealed that the frequency of social media usage and social comparison had significantly positive impacts, while the duration of social media usage and social media addiction symptoms had a negative impact on the moral development of adolescents. The findings of this study would be beneficial to teenagers, parents, educators, and mental health professionals. The insights gained can guide teenagers in making informed choices, help parents manage and support their children's digital lives, inform educators about integrating social media into moral education, and assist mental health professionals in developing effective interventions.

Keywords: Adolescents, moral development, parents' perceptions, social media usage