

The Rising Need for Digital Wellbeing and Social Media Literacy in Early Adolescence: A Call to Educators, Parents, and Clinicians

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Abstract:

Digital wellbeing is a key developmental task during the adolescent years, which can be supported by educators, parents, and clinicians. The average age of getting a smartphone in the US is 10.3 which is also a critical period of early adolescence where there is a desire for approval from peers, more autonomy from parents, and testing boundaries of who they are and who they want to be. By understanding that the online and offline worlds of adolescents are often intertwined and can deeply affect their sense of self and influence their wellbeing, it takes a village to develop safeguards in the increasingly digital and AI-infused environments as well as role models to guide youth for healthy and productive use of social technologies. I will present recommendations for promoting digital wellbeing and social media literacy during the early adolescent years as well as describe a case study of how trusted adults and near-peer mentors can provide a training ground to be proactive to co-design healthy technologies for their future digital ecosystems.

Keywords:

Social media, media literacy, adolescents, digital wellbeing.