

Student's Name

Professor's Name

Course Name/Code

Date

Psychology Extended Essay

Title: Social Media Use and Adolescent Self-Esteem

Research Question: To what extent does passive social media consumption negatively affect self-esteem in adolescents aged 13-17?

Subject: Psychology

Citation style: APA

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Context: rise of social media use in adolescence, existing concern in clinical literature

B. Research question: restated

C. Thesis: Passive consumption (scrolling without posting) has a measurable negative effect on self-esteem; active use does not show the same relationship

II. DEFINING PASSIVE VS ACTIVE SOCIAL MEDIA USE

A. Claim: The passive/active distinction is essential. Studies that collapse both produce contradictory findings.

B. Evidence: Verduyn et al. (2015), Fardouly & Vartanian (2015)

C. Analysis: Establishes the conceptual framework for the rest of the essay, which depends on

III. SOCIAL COMPARISON THEORY AS THE MECHANISM

A. Claim: Passive consumption triggers upward social comparison, which is the proximate cause of self-esteem reduction

B. Evidence: Festinger (1954) social comparison theory, Vogel et al. (2014) experimental study

C. Analysis: Links the behavioral finding to a psychological mechanism and strengthens the causal claim

IV. MODERATING VARIABLES: WHO IS MOST AFFECTED

A. Claim: The effect is stronger in girls and in adolescents with pre-existing low self-esteem; it is not uniform across the population

B. Evidence: Twenge et al. (2018), Kelly et al. (2019)

C. Analysis: Complicates the thesis productively and shows where the effect is most pronounced

V. LIMITATIONS OF THE EVIDENCE BASE

A. Claim: Most studies are correlational; experimental evidence is limited by ethical constraints on research design

B. Evidence: Odgers & Jensen (2020) meta-analysis limitations section

C. Analysis: Honest appraisal of what the evidence can and cannot establish, required for Criterion C

VI. CONCLUSION

A. Thesis restated with qualification: passive use negatively affects self-esteem in adolescents, particularly girls and those with low baseline self-esteem

B. Summary: the argument chain

C. Implications: Suggests platform design interventions rather than blanket screen-time restrictions