# Social Media, Adolescence and Mental Health: Navigating the Complexities



In 1980, two 13-year-olds from a suburban grammar school faced law enforcement for shoplifting at a local shopping center. They, along with two male peers, skipped school and were caught with concealed CDs at HMV. The incident quickly reached their classmates through text messages, leaving them distressed.

Reflecting on adolescence, the teenage years were filled with risky and sometimes illegal behaviors, influenced by peer pressure and the desire to fit in. This volatility combined with natural teenage vulnerability.

Fast forward 23 years, psychologist Jonathan Haidt's book “Anxious Generation” highlights increasing anxiety and mental health issues among teenagers, often attributed to social media. However, the interplay of other factors such as obesity, academic pressure, and the Covid-19 pandemic complicates the narrative.

While social media is widely seen as amplifying mental health struggles through cyberbullying and the dissemination of harmful content, it’s essential to consider that adolescence has always been an arduous phase characterized by significant biological and social transformations.

Social media’s impact is nuanced; it can be beneficial, especially for marginalized groups like LGBTQ+ teens, fostering a sense of community and support. Thus, rather than outright bans, a more nuanced understanding and strategic intervention are necessary to support adolescents.

Understanding these complexities can help navigate the challenges adolescents face today, recognizing the ongoing evolution in how teenage mental health is perceived and managed.