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Impact of Social Media on Mental Health of Adolescents

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Adolescents throughout the country regularly use internet, cellphones and videogames to gather information and communicate with each other. This ability to interact with each other's is the unique features of social media which provides powerful new ways for adolescent to create and navigate their social environments. Social media use has been climbing sharply in recent years, especially in younger populations such as adolescents. Any website that allows social interactions considered a social media site, including social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, Line, MySpace, Skype, Wechat, Instragam, gaming sites and video sites such as YouTube and blogs. These sites offer adolescents for communication and entertainment and have grown exponentially in recently years. The current body of literature on social media presents conflicting views about social media's effects on one's mental health and well-being. While most research indicates that social media has some effect on one's mental health, contradictory reports indicate both positive and negative effects. Such as positive effects are socialization and communication, enhanced learning opportunities, accessing health information while negative are Facebook depression, cyberbullying, online harassment, sexting/texting, lack of concentration, decline in intellectual abilities, stress, fatigue and emotion suppression.

Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO, 1948) defined mental health as a complete state of physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. This definition clearly affirms that health is a positive state and not just the absence of pathogens, i.e. a disease-causing organism. According to the bio- psycho-social view, health is much more than the absence of disease. A person who has no diseased condition is not sick, but this person may not be healthy, either. Since health is multi-dimensional all aspects of living, i.e. biological, psychological and social factors must be taken into account while examining the status of health. 'Feeling good' is more than 'not feeling bad' and research in neuroscience (Zautra, 2003) found that the human brain responds in distinctly different patterns to positive feelings and negative feelings. Ryff and Keyes (1995), Keyes and Lopez (2002), Keyes and Magyar (2003) defined mental health as the combination of emotional wellbeing (presence of positive effect, satisfaction with life and absence of negative affect), social wellbeing (incorporating acceptance, actualization, contribution, coherence and integration), and psychological wellbeing (self-acceptance, personal

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growth, purpose in life, environmental mastery and positive relations with others).

The advent of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter has drastically changed the online environment in the past decade by allowing users to exchange ideas, feelings, personal information, pictures, and videos at an unprecedented rate. Further, social media users have rapidly adopted online social interaction as a fundamental part of daily life, as evidenced by the growing number of daily users. In fact, Facebook alone reported an estimated 1 billion active users in 27 August 2015. It means 1 in 7 people on earth used Facebook in a single day to stay connected with their friends and family (posted by Mark Zuckerberg on Thursday, August 27, 2015).

Consequently, social media has an increasingly significant influence on multiple facets of modern life beyond online communication from marketing to politics to education to health to basic human interaction. In many of these areas, social media presents clear benefits; however, because this social networking phenomenon is relatively new, few research studies have examined the overall effect of frequent social media use on the mental health and well-being of its users. This limited understanding is particularly concerning in the context of teens and young adult users, as teens and young adults tend to spend the most time socializing online and are therefore at the greatest risk of experiencing potentially negative effects.

In 1971, the first email was delivered. More than 40 years on, social media has taken the world by storm. Social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, are now used by 1 in 4 people worldwide. Such activity may seem harmless, but some researchers suggest social media may affect our mental health and well-being. On the surface, Facebook provides an invaluable resource for fulfilling the basic human need for social connection (Kross). In other words, social media can both negatively and positively affect people with mental health conditions. This limited understanding is particularly concerning in the context of teens and young adult users, as these groups tend to spend the most time socializing online and are therefore at the greatest risk of experiencing potentially negative effects. Recent findings show heavy social media usage rates among teens; these heavy usage rates suggest that a large part of teens' social and emotional development is now happening on the Internet, and this phenomenon may be continuing into young adulthood. There are many conflicting views on the effects of frequent use of social media. Some findings recommend positive effects while others suggest negative effects, although most studies suggest some type of effect on the mental health of users.

A recent poll examining teens' use of social media found that 90% of teens under the age of 18 have used some form of social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Google+) in their lifetime, and 75% of all teens have at least one active social networking profile (Common Sense Media, 2012). This overview identified Facebook for the highest level of use among teens with 68% of all teens saying that Facebook was their preferred website. With regard to frequency of use, half of all teens indicate that they visit a social media website daily, and about one fourth of all teens are considered heavy users, meaning they use multiple types of social media on a daily basis (Common Sense Media, 2012). These heavy usage rates suggest that a large part of teens' social and emotional development is now happening on the Internet, and this phenomenon may be continuing into young adulthood.

While the increase in social media use is indisputable, there are many conflicting views on

the effects of frequent use. From a positive perspective, Ito, Horst and Bittani (2008) recommend that engagement in social media helps a teen develop important knowledge and social skills and encourages them to be active citizens who create and share content. This is supported by the assertion that social acceptance like that provided by social media networks is an important component of an adolescent's life (Malti, Gummerum, Keller, Chaparro & Buchmann, 2012). Similarly, Gonzales and Hancock (2011) allege an increase in self-awareness and self-esteem reportedly experienced by users who actively update their social media profiles.

However, others point to emerging evidence that extensive use of these websites may be harmful to one's mental health because an intense connection with the online environment can trigger depression in some adolescents (O'Keeffe, Clarke-Pearson & Council on Communications Media, 2011), raising the need for greater understanding of how this pervasive social media use affects students' mental health and well-being.

For illustration, recent findings have led one group of researchers to coin a new term, Facebook depression (O'Keeffe, et al., 2011). O'Keeffe et al. define Facebook depression as depression that arises when adolescents spend a lot of time on social media websites, such as Facebook, and then start displaying depressive symptoms (2011). Adolescents who suffer from Facebook depression may be at risk for social isolation and sometimes begin to exhibit risky, aggressive, or self-destructive behaviors (O'Keeffe, et al., 2011). However, critics question O'Keeffe et al.'s conclusions about causation with regard to depression (Grohol, 2011), pointing out that a correlation between the study variables does not mean a causal link exists between social media use and depression. Whether or not O'Keeffe et al.'s conclusions are valid, subsequent studies have suggested that excessive time spent viewing social media websites could increase one's risk for depression (Jelenchick, Eickhoff & Moreno, 2013; Pantic et al., 2012; Rajani, Berman & Rozanski, 2011).

A potential factor contributing to Facebook depression in teens is that social media forums provide a platform for increased co-rumination. Co-rumination involves repetitive, problem-focused conversation among peers, and it is often associated with counterproductive coping strategies such as internalizing problems (Starr & Davila, 2009; Tompkins, Hockett, Abraibesh & Witt, 2011). Co-rumination is also positively correlated with self-reports of anxiety, depression, and aggressive behavior in adolescents (Tompkins, et al., 2011). Facebook and other social media websites allow adolescents to perpetuate this repetitive, problem-focused dialogue in the virtual environment. This increased time spent focused on a single problem could lead to serious psychological consequences in teens (Starr & Davila, 2009; Tompkins, et al., 2011), namely depressive disorders.

The emerging evidence suggesting a link between social media use and depression is significant because depression is an ongoing public health problem affecting teens and young adults. In 2011, the American College Health Association–National College Health Assessment, a nationally recognized college health survey that assesses a wide variety of health topics including students' mental health, found that about 30% of college students reported feeling "so depressed that it was difficult to function" at some time in the previous year (American College Health Association, 2012). This can be quite problematic for students because depression has been shown to affect academic performance (Eisenberg, Gollust, Golberstein & Hefner, 2007).

Depressed students are also more likely to smoke (Cranford, Eisenberg & Serras, 2009), abuse alcohol, and engage in risky sexual behavior (Weitzman, 2004). Additionally, depression is a major risk factor for suicide (Garlow et al., 2008), the third leading cause of death for teens and young adults ages 15 to 24 (National Center for Health Statistics, 2012).

The current body of literature on social media presents conflicting views about social media's effects on one's mental health and well-being. While most research indicates that social media has some effect on one's mental health, contradictory reports indicate both positive and negative effects. Given the prevalence of depression in teens and young adults, as well as the detrimental effects of depression on both those affected and society at large, additional exploration of the potential negative effects of social media use especially heavy use on mental health is warranted. This study explores the possibility of a direct relationship between the volume of social media use and overall mental health in a population of adolescents.

Risks of Using Social Media

While using social media is an integral part of the daily life of adolescents, there are a number of risks associated with social media use, specifically, negative effect on mental health, Facebook depression, cyberbullying, online harassment, Sexting/texting, lack of attention span, decline in intellectual abilities, stress, fatigue, emotional suppression and privacy violations. These risks are similar to faced offline. However, the risks profile for the use of various types of the social media depends on the type of risk, a teen's use of the media and the psychological makeup of the teen using them. It is important to note that teens most at risky behaviors offline and also have difficulties in other parts of their lives (Berkman, 2010).

Facebook Depression

Scholars have anticipated a new phenomenon called "Facebook depression," defined as depression that develops when preteens and teens spend a great deal of time on social media sites, such as Facebook, and then begin to exhibit classic symptoms of depression. Acceptance and contact with peers is an important element of adolescent life. The intensity of the online world is thought to be a factor that may produce depression in some adolescents. As with offline depression, preadolescents and adolescents who suffer from Facebook depression are at risk for social isolation and sometimes turn to risky Internet sites and blogs for "help" that may promote substance abuse, unsafe sexual practices, or aggressive or self-destructive behaviors.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is deliberately using digital media to communicate false, embarrassing, or hostile information about another person. It is the most common online risk for all adolescents and is a peer-to-peer risk.

Online Harassment

Online harassment is often used interchangeably with the term "cyberbullying," it is actually a different entity. Current data suggest that online harassment is not as common as offline harassment, and participation in social networking sites does not put most children at risk of online harassment. On the other hand, cyberbullying is quite common, can occur to any young

person online, and can cause profound psychosocial outcomes including depression, anxiety, severe isolation, and, tragically, suicide.

Sexting/texting

Sexting can be defined as “sending, receiving, or forwarding sexually explicit messages, photographs, or images via cell phone, computer, or other digital devices.” Many of these images become distributed rapidly via cell phones or the Internet. This phenomenon does occur among the adolescent population; a recent survey revealed that 20% of adolescents have sent or posted nude or seminude photographs or videos of themselves. Some adolescents who have engaged in sexting have been threatened or charged with felony child pornography charges, although some states have started characterizing such behaviors as juvenile-law misdemeanors. Additional consequences include school suspension for perpetrators and emotional distress with accompanying mental health conditions for victims.

Lack of concentration

The social networking activity can cause decline of attention concentration and other symptoms of ADHD. While communicating using social networks, people constantly switch from one task to another: read the comments, check the updates, turn on some video, while replying to a message, and write a short comment. During such activity, people’s attention dwells on one thing and constantly switches to another one. It also forms a certain habit of learning information. You get used to receive information in small portions, constantly switching from one type of information to another, for example, from replying to a comment to some video viewing. This habit creates difficulties in attention concentration. It is more difficult to hold your attention on one thing for long. The symptoms of the attention deficit disorder are to find difficult to maintain attention and concentration.

Stress, Fatigue

Constant switching from one task to another, which can occur during the work with social media, strongly tires your brain. The brain gets tired of the information abundance, especially if this information is received chaotically, in small portions, but rather quickly. The brain takes time and quiet to “digest” the received data and to process the information. But instead of this, many people continue to stuff it with new information from social networks or Internet, keeping away from some rest. This is the way the stress caused by the lack of rest and concentration occurs.

Emotion Suppression

Emotional suppression refers to when something suddenly occurs like bad news and thinking about the bad things. When a person gets distracted from unpleasant emotions without giving the brain the opportunity to solve the problems associated with these emotions or without thinking about an unpleasant situation it leads to emotion suppression.

Benefits For Using Social Media

While using social media it gives more benefits to adolescents. Most benefits fall into the following categories: socialization and communication, enhanced learning opportunities and accessing health information.

Socialization and Communication

Social media sites allow teens to accomplish online many of the tasks that are important to them offline: staying connected with friends and family, making new friends, sharing pictures, and exchanging ideas. Social media participation also can offer adolescents deeper benefits that extend into their view of self, community, and the world, including, opportunities for community engagement through raising money for charity and volunteering for local events, including political and philanthropic events; enhancement of individual and collective creativity through development and sharing of artistic and musical endeavors; growth of ideas from the creation of blogs, podcasts, videos, and gaming sites; expansion of one's online connections through shared interests to include others from more diverse backgrounds (such communication is an important step for all adolescents and affords the opportunity for respect, tolerance, and increased discourse about personal and global issues); and Fostering of one's individual identity and unique social skills.

Enhanced Learning Opportunities

Middle and high school students are using social media to connect with one another on homework and group projects. For example, Facebook and similar social media programs allow students to gather outside of class to collaborate and exchange ideas about assignments. Some schools successfully use blogs as teaching tools, which has the benefit of reinforcing skills in English, written expression, and creativity.

Accessing Health Information

Adolescents are finding that they can access online information about their health concerns easily and anonymously. Excellent health resources are increasingly available to youth on a variety of topics of interest to this population, such as sexually transmitted infections, stress reduction, and signs of depression. Adolescents with chronic illnesses can access Web sites through which they can develop supportive networks of people with similar conditions. The mobile technologies that teens use daily, namely cell phones, instant messaging, and text messaging, have already produced multiple improvements in their health care, such as increased medication adherence, better disease understanding, and fewer missed appointments. Given that the new social media venues all have mobile applications, teenagers will have enhanced opportunities to learn about their health issues and communicate with their doctors. However, because of their young age, adolescents can encounter inaccuracies during these searches and require parental involvement to be sure they are using reliable online resources, interpreting the information correctly, and not becoming overwhelmed by the information they are reading. Encouraging parents to ask about their children's and adolescents' online searches can help facilitate not only discovery of this information but discussion on these topics.

Conclusions

Adolescents are embracing the regular use of social media, now more than ever. The use of this social media communication among adolescents has grown tremendously over the recent years and is becoming an important focus in the lives of many adolescents. Although there are numerous benefits to social media use for adolescents, there are also several potential risks that may be detrimental to their mental health and well-being. It is crucial that mental health providers

be familiar with these benefits and risks in order to more effectively educate and guide patients and families towards only safe, healthy and appropriate use of this media. It is also very important to screen for risky online behaviors and to assess for the psychological impact of these behaviors as a part of a comprehensive psychiatric evaluation. The current body of literature on social media presents conflicting views about social media's effects on one's mental health and well-being. While most research indicates that social media has some effect on one's mental health, contradictory reports indicate both positive and negative effects. Such as positive effects are socialization and communication, enhanced learning opportunities, accessing health information while negative as Facebook depression, cyberbullying, online harassment and sexting/texting, lack of concentration, decline in intellectual abilities, stress, fatigue and emotional suppression. To avoid these risks, important steps could be the information sharing at schools and by parents. The number of different counseling and information sessions can be organized at schools. A proper consciousness movement can be started to comprehend the long term effects of social media on adolescents. The schools should give education programs for parents. It should be ensured that the parents are conscious of the issues with the abuse of social media. The parents should also afford a positive influence concerning the use of social media. It should also ensure that the adolescents get proper education about the negative effects of social media. It should be ensured that there is adequate opportunity for every child to express their creativity apart from the social media in school and at home. The proper schools, houses, groups and clubs should be made to create artistic programs, music programs, sports tournaments etc. at younger ages. Some older fellows can be made their good friends and they can act as role models and set a good example of how to utilize social media in positive sense. The social media applications should be restricted to certain age limits. The parental signature should be made compulsory for the adolescents to utilize certain applications. Proper time limitations should be fixed on certain applications for adolescents. They should only work at desired times only under the surveillance of their guardians. Any application that has a negative effect like violence, racism, discrimination etc. should be dissolved at once completely.

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