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Social Media's Affect on the Health of Young Adults

Article #2

Introduction

Nadya S. Neuhaeusler's journal article, *Cyberbullying During COVID-19 Pandemic: Relation to Perceived Social Isolation Among College and University Students* describes the concern that there may be a positive correlation between cyber victimization, cyber criminal behavior, and the increase of young adults' presence online due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Researchers proposed three hypotheses: Cyberbullying victimization has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic; Social media usage is positively associated with cyberbullying victimization; Perceived social isolation is positively associated with cyberbullying victimization (Neuhaeusler, 2024).

How was the Research Conducted?

The research reviewed past pieces of literature on the subject. However, it was noted that despite cyberbullying being a society-wide issue for all ages, scholarly works generally focused on cyberbullying among minors in school, with adolescents being one of the most researched age groups (Arntfield, 2015; Giumetti et al., 2022). Researchers of this experiment had decided to reach out to currently enrolled college students at least 18 years of age who had access to the Internet. Students were asked to fill out a survey that asked how often they had experienced acts of cyberbullying on a scale of 1-never to 5-every day. Students were also questioned on how long they consumed social media from (0) not using social media to (8) 8 hours of social media a day; along with the question, "How would you say has the pandemic influenced the amount of time you spend on social media platforms?"

The sample was limited and had to be generalized as student information was kept confidential. Another limitation was that researchers did not include more personal variables such as life satisfaction, stress, and self-esteem despite being noted that "...researchers have discovered links between cyberbullying and depression, loneliness, and self-esteem" (Varghese & Pistole, 2017).

Findings

It was found that social media usage did not directly affect cyber victimization, but increased feelings of social isolation. It was suggested that "During the pandemic, individuals might have increased their passive social media usage by increasingly using social media to watch videos or obtain necessary information rather than actively engaging in commenting or discussions with other users" (Neuhaeusler, 2024).

Relation to Social Science

In the end, researchers gained new insight into how social media plays a part in adolescent life. It would seem that social media has become a more prominent social force due to the limitations on in-person interaction at the time. With more people finding comfort and engaging more with the internet, the less of a necessity it is to engage those same things in the real world. Socializing is a human need, but doing so through the Internet is not a suitable replacement for in-person engagement; creating feelings of social isolation. Unfortunately, the researchers did not engage many students who had little to no engagement with social media as I would be curious as to whether someone without access feels any more isolated than someone who only relies on social media. Research on a topic like this should incorporate a multidisciplinary approach to include the psychological and sociological perspectives on how the internet is becoming the more prominent form of social interaction.

What can We Learn From This

This study helps to visualize the effects of outsourcing basic human needs to the internet and acknowledge what is more fulfilling. Social media use and cyber victimization may not have a direct correlation, but researchers have opened up the conversation on how social media usage affects feelings of social isolation. Depression, self-esteem, and loneliness affect the health of people and the society they help build; analyzing the effects social media poses on the health of young adults is a worthwhile topic to consider.

Citations

- Arntfield, M. (2015). Toward a cybervictimology: Cyberbullying, routine activities theory, and the anti-sociality of Social Media. *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 40(3), 371–388. <https://doi.org/10.22230/cjc.2015v40n3a2863>
- Neuhaeusler, N. S. (2024). Cyberbullying during COVID-19 pandemic: Relation to perceived social isolation among college and University Students. *International Journal of Cybersecurity Intelligence & Cybercrime*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.52306/2578-3289.1140>
- Varghese, M. E., & Pistole, M. C. (2017). College student cyberbullying: Self-esteem, depression, loneliness, and attachment. *Journal of College Counseling*, 20(1), 7–21. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jocc.12055>