Alex Yeoh

Professor Richter

CS 1000-90

9 October 2021

How Depressives Surf the Web

The authors, Sriram Chellappan and Raghavendra Kotikalapudi, discuss in their New York Times article their research on how depressed college students use the internet. They discuss how internet usage can be an identifier for potential cases of depression and how their research could potentially be used to encourage individuals to seek medical attention they may need.

The authors begin by discussing how internet usage can be an identifier for potential cases of depression by going through their research process and their findings. They started their research by having participants fill a questionnaire that is commonly used for measuring depression and found roughly 30% of the participants met the criteria for depressive symptoms (Chellappan and Kotikalapudi). They then went to the college’s information technology department to request their participant’s internet usage data, which is data commonly collected and use to diagnose network connections, to see how the participants used the internet (Chellappan and Kotikalapudi). Finally, they statistically analyzed both these datasets to find correlations in internet usage and depression (Chellappan and Kotikalapudi). Their research suggests that higher scores on the survey, which indicates a higher chance of depression, related to higher file sharing (Chellappan and Kotikalapudi). They also found high email usage to be an indicator of depressive people and posit such activity may relate to higher levels of anxiety as other studies have found (Chellappan and Kotikalapudi). Another behavior they found to be an indication of depression is frequent switching between internet applications and suggest this may be in indication of difficulty concentration which is a sign of depressive students as other studies have found (Chellappan and Kotikalapudi). They found video watching, gaming, and chatting to be other signifiers of depressive behavior (Chellappan and Kotikalapudi).

The authors discuss how their research could potentially be used to encourage individuals to seek medical attention they may need. They wonder if their research could be made into an application that can be installed on computers and phones to monitor internet usage and give the user a warning if it detected depressive behavior (Chellappan and Kotikalapudi). The research could lead to a cost efficient way to have people get medical attention they may need early, be a way for parents to monitor their children’s mental health or be used by universities to notify councilors of students who may need help (Chellappan and Kotikalapudi).

Works Cited

Chellappan, Sriram, and Raghavendra Kotikalapudi. “How Depressives Surf the Web.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 15 June 2012, https://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/17/opinion/sunday/how-depressed-people-use-the-internet.html?\_r=0.