Ethics of Social Media

Effects on Mental Health in Adolescence

by Albert Chen and Andrew Dickerson

Negative Impact of Social Media on Adolescent Mental Health

Problems that Social Media can worsen

Mental Health

- Studies have found that online social networking can be linked to a rise in psychiatric disorders like depression, anxiety and self esteem
- Increase in screen time use contributes to this
- Amplified by addictive algorithms
- The literal Surgeon General has said that it's a problem

Political Extremism

- Extremism movements like Al-Qaeda, the Taliban as well as White Nationalist movements have used Social Media to Recruit members
- Often targets young men that already have problems

Misinformation

- Relative freedom and lack of censorship means that misinformation is more likely to spread
- The technology also allows for the fast spread of misinformation
- Algorithms again lead to the amplification of this problem

Effects of Social Media on Mental Health

- Can lead to an uptick in disorders like anxiety, depression

    - <u>Reduce</u> isolation & loneliness

    - Especially affects adolescent females who are more vulnerable to sexual harrasment

- General Rise in

Misinformation

- The relative lack of censorship and freedom on Social Media helps lead to the rapid spread of misinformation

    - The recent Riots in the UK caused by rumors that the perpetrator of a stabbing attack was a Muslim asylum seeker

    - Trump's Cats and Dogs claim about immigrants eating pets (Disproven by the City Administration of Springfield where Trump claims it took place)

- Lack of trust in conventional news media and increase of news from Social Media
    - The numbers vary per news source, but over 50% of adults now get their news from Social Media
    - The algorithms Social Media uses means that people are more likely to get news sources that match their already existing biases

Benefits of *Social Media* in Mental Health

Connection and Support

How Social Media:

Facilitates Social Connections

&

Maintains Virtual Support Networks

Facilitation of Social Connections

- Revolutionize Connecting with Friends and Family

    - Combat feelings of isolation and loneliness, acting to improve overall mental health.

    - Serves an outlet for those struggling to engage in traditional social settings.

    - Allows users to interact regardless of physical or logistical limitations.

Virtual Support Networks

- Supporting Infrastructure for Mental Health

  - Provide a safe environment for users to share experiences, offer advice, and seek solace, reducing alienation and promoting a sense of belonging.

- Allowing for more accurate representation of the self:

  - Allows users to engage in communities that accept them regardless of sexuality, gender, religion, or other views that may not be tolerated in their physical space.

How Social Media:

Raises Mental Health Awareness

&

Reduces Stigma and Promoting Conversations

Mental Health Awareness

Section - 2

Campaign for Mental Health Awareness

- Raising Awareness

  - Through organizations, influencers, and activists campaigns and information about mental health has never been more easily accesible to the public.

  - Acts as a space to gain insight about the causes and effects of anxiety, depression, or other challenges to mental well-being.

- Promotes understanding and empathy

  - By interconnecting people of all walks of life, Social media can act as a common ground to overcome outstanding prejudices..

Reducing Stigma & Promoting Conversations

- Fosters a Community of Compassion and Support

    - By allowing users to openly share their journeys and by highlighting the inportance of seeking support, social media acts as an outlet to challenge stigmas and social norms.

- Anonymity Online

    - By providing an open space for individuals to more easily share their struggles and ideas, users can take solace in a place without judgment.

Safe use of Social Media

Section - 3

How May we Address:

Mindful Usage

&

Confidentiality and Privacy Concerns

Mindful Usage of Social Media

- How to Use Social Media Carefully

  - Limit screen time and avoid emotional triggers that may arise from comparing oneself to others.

- Diversification of Content Intake

  - Curate social media feeds to include diverse and body-positive content. Unfollow accounts that promote unrealistic beauty standards or toxic diet culture.

Confidentiality and Privacy Concerns

- Anonymity on the Internet

    - While anonymity does offer certain libirties and protections, it is important to understand that what is posted on social media is visibile to everyone.

    - Users should be careful when discussing personal information online.

- Seek Support

    - If you begin to develop an unhealthy relationship with social media services, don't hesitate to reach out to friends, family, or mental health professionals.