INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LAW MANAGEMENT & HUMANITIES

[ISSN 2581-5369]

Volume 5 | Issue 4

2022

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Association between Social Media Usage and Social Anxiety or Depression

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to discuss how using social media can lead to social anxiety, isolation, and depression. Modern civilization has seen a significant increase in the usage of social media, particularly among young individuals. Individuals who are socially awkward and lonely seem to prefer and actively seek out virtual networking contacts on social networks. The impact on well-being would also be investigated in this study.

I. INTRODUCTION

Anti- The human species is a sociable animal. To prosper in life, we require the company of another, and the quality of one's relationships has a significant bearing on both one's psychological wellbeing and enjoyment. Social interaction with others has been shown to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression, improve self-esteem, bring happiness and peace, avoid isolation, and perhaps even lengthen life. On the other hand, a lack of solid social ties can seriously jeopardize your psychological and emotional wellbeing.[2]

Many people worldwide now use social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube, and Instagram to communicate with one another. Whilst each one has advantages, it's crucial to keep in mind that social media could never substitute face-to-face interaction. The chemicals that reduce stress and cause you to feel happier, better, and much more optimistic are only released when you are in direct physical touch with other people. Paradoxically, social media, which is intended to bring individuals together, can really cause you to feel increasingly alone and alienated and aggravate psychological problems like anxiety and depression if you spend too long using it.[3]

It may well be time to reevaluate one's online behaviors and strike a healthy balance if one invests an overwhelming time on social media and experiences emotions of unhappiness, discontent, irritation, or loneliness.

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[2] Lawrence Robinson & Melinda Smith, SOCIAL MEDIA AND MENTAL HEALTH HELPGUIDE.ORG (2021), https://www.helpguide.org/articles/mental-health/social-media-and mental-health.htm (last visited Jun 2022).
[3] *Ibid.*

Social networking sites are made to hold your interest, engage you online, and make you frequently monitor for changes. It is how businesses generate revenue. However, social media use might induce behavioral demands, just like gambling addiction or a substance abuse towards nicotine, alcohol, or narcotics. Dopamine, the "reward" chemical released after successful gambling, eating chocolate, or smoking, for example, can be released in the brain in response to receiving a like, a repost, or a positive response to a post. Even when it starts to adversely affect other facets of life, the further you're praised, the more and more energy you would like to spend on social networking.[4]

Socially anxious people appear to be at an especially high risk of using social media more often and casually. People who struggle with social anxiety worry that others will criticize or adversely appraise them in social circumstances, which can hinder their ability to form deep social connections. Furthermore, individuals with social anxiety may favor online engagement over face-to-face contact as a consequence of their potentially harmful views on social issues, which raises the possibility that they would participate there more regularly.

Moreover, they commonly participate in unfavorable ascending social comparisons, wherein they regard themself more poorly in contrast to all other individuals. As a consequence, the higher possibility of poorly comparing oneself to everyone else puts those with social anxiety at enhanced danger of participating more idly digitally and becoming more socially alienated and lonely as a response.[5]

Additionally, it has been suggested that people with social anxiety utilize the Internet to control and make up for their anxieties in social environments. People with social anxiety may think of the internet as a whole as a greater welcoming environment for socialising, which influences the desire as well as one's decision to participate digitally instead of physically.[6]

Additionally, people with social anxiety often look for social media optimization to make up for the lack of social support they encounter in the physical world. It's still not apparent, though, if this inclination for and propensity for online interaction truly helps socially anxious people get the positive reinforcement they need, or if their social anxieties accompany them online. Therefore, it's possible that socially anxious people feel unpleasant social interactions online even while they're looking for social support.[7]

The steep increase of isolation in contemporary culture has received more attention lately. The

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[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] *Ibid.*
[7] *Ibid.*

unpleasant condition of believing that one's intended and real social ties are not aligned is known as loneliness (Peplau & Perlman, 1982). Although when accompanied by friends and relatives, people can still feel lonely because loneliness is more about the overall quality of one's connections than that of the quantity of those connections or the amount of time with each other. (Peplau & Perlman ,1982). Even though the association between screen time and social media usage and the rise in loneliness amongst youth is not yet properly established, several researchers speculate that it may be such.[8]

However, it seems that lonely people might interact online these days, it is yet unknown if they are successful in finding what it is they are seeking. Additionally, it is still unclear if some forms of SMU (such as idle browsing and actively sharing data without contacting others) can make people feel more lonely. The youth of today who are using social media the most could feel social isolation and loneliness, but it may also boost chances for social connection by fostering a culture of social comparisons.[9]

Socially nervous people are more likely to encounter social isolation and rejection, which increases their likelihood of loneliness. Inside a neighborhood sample, past social anxiety has been the only factor that predicted prospective loneliness in addition to previous loneliness, suggesting that social anxiety is a significant factor in the endurance of loneliness. More socially anxious and depressed people may be particularly vulnerable to social isolation, which increases their likelihood of remaining lonely in the long term. This is because people limit their ability to form constructive social contacts via false thoughts about themselves and everyone else, including by avoiding social occasions.[10]

We are eager in learning more about the connections between social anxiety and loneliness and SMU. People who are more socially awkward and lonesome may be more likely to be involved in harmful online conduct and suffer unpleasant repercussions as a result. Additionally, it seems that those who are more socially awkward and depressed may try to make up for or improve on the sparse in-person social connections digitally. The connection between solitude and dysfunctional SMU might well be explained in part by social anxiety. Social anxiety compensated for a sizable fraction of the variation in the association between loneliness and propensity for online engagement.[11]

It's worth noting that social anxiety hasn't always been considered in the more recent studies

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[8] *Ibid.*
[9] *Ibid.*
[10] *Ibid.*
[11] *Ibid.*

on maladaptive SMU and loneliness, either as a precursor or a result of this association. It seems that negative SMU may be predicted by both social anxiety and loneliness, and also that negative social media usage and choice may be predicted through both social phobia and loneliness.[12]

Additionally, Social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram tend to worsen FOMO, despite the fact that the phenomenon has been for far longer than social media. One's self-esteem may suffer, anxiety may be sparked, and one's usage of social media may increase due to the perception that you are missing out on certain things. Even though it involves driving erratically, skipping sleep every night, or putting social media involvement ahead of lasting relationships, FOMO may make you pick up your smartphone every several minutes at least for news or obsessively reply to each notification.[13]

II. POSITIVE ASPECTS OF SMU

There are still numerous beneficial ways that social media may keep you engaged and boost your wellness, even though online engagement doesn't offer the same psychological advantages as physical contact.

Social media allows you to do the following:

1. You can connect and keep up with relatives and friends all across the globe through social media.
2. Make new acquaintances and join new groups; connect with those who have similar goals or interests.
3. Join or support deserving causes; spread the word about crucial concerns.
4. During difficult times, look for or provide emotional support.
5. Find a crucial social connection if you, for instance, live in a rural place, have little freedom, suffer from social anxiety, or belong to a minority group.
6. Find a way to express yourself and your ideas.
7. Find resources that can teach you useful data.

The following are signs that one's mental health may be being negatively impacted by social media:

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[12] *Ibid.*
[13] *Ibid.*

- Being preoccupied at work or school: One may feel pressured to post frequently about oneself, to receive feedback or likes on their postings, or to retweet and remark on their friends' postings.

- Lacking the leisure to think about oneself: One may devote all of their free time to social media, which leaves one with almost no time to focus on one's identity, thoughts, or the reasons behind one's actions; the elements that help one grow as an individual.

- Dangerous conduct to obtain likes, follows, or favorable comments on social media: One may do deviant activities or other risky acts, conduct deadly practical jokes, upload humiliating content, or abuse people online.

- Having difficulty sleeping: If one goes to bed every night, once they get up every morning, or perhaps both, they might check their social media. One's sleep might be disturbed by the illumination of cellphones as well as other electronics, which could have a negative impact on psychological wellbeing.

- Anxiety or depression symptoms become worse: One feeling more nervous, unhappy, or lonesome after utilizing social media instead of having positive sentiments reduced and your morale elevated.

- Spending a lot of time online than with peers in person: A majority of the offline social engagement is now replaced by using social networking sites. Often feeling the urge to continuously monitor social media, even while you're out with friends, frequently motivated by emotions that others may be experiencing more fun than you seem to be.

- Using social media to negatively compare oneself to other: One doesn't like their physique or even have poor self-esteem. One could even engage in abnormal eating practices.

- Being a victim of cyberbullying: Perhaps one is concerned that they have no influence over what others publish about them.[14]

III. CONCLUSION

One may always choose options that could benefit their overall welfare and psychological wellbeing. The following are ways one can put themselves first:

   i.   **Reduce Time Online**

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[14] *Ibid.*

- "We stand to gain by cutting back on our social media usage. For the majority of us, it implies using our cell phones less frequently. These pointers might be useful:
    - **Use an app to track how much time you spend on social media each day:** Then set a goal for how much you want to reduce it.
    - **Turn off your phone at certain times of the day:** such as when you're driving, in a meeting, at the gym, having dinner, spending time with offline friends, or playing with your kids. Don't take your phone with you to the bathroom.
    - **Don't bring your phone or tablet to bed**: Turn devices off and leave them in another room overnight to charge.
    - **Disable social media notifications:** It's hard to resist the constant buzzing, beeping, and dinging of your phone alerting you to new messages. Turning off notifications can help you regain control of your time and focus.
    - **Limit checks:** If you compulsively check your phone every few minutes, wean yourself off by limiting your checks to once every 15 minutes. Then once every 30 minutes, then once an hour. There are apps that can automatically limit when you're able to access your phone.
    - **Try removing social media apps from your phone:** So you can only check Facebook, Twitter, and the like from your tablet or computer. If this sounds like too drastic a step, try removing one social media app at a time to see how much you really miss it."

ii. Change your focus

- Most of us use social media only out of routine or to aimlessly pass the time when we're bored. However, by concentrating on one's reason to use social networking sites, you can not only cut down on the amount of time you spend there but also enhance your perspective and steer clear of many of its drawbacks.
- One's encounter on social media will probably be very distinct if individuals log on it out of boredom, see how many people liked a prior post, and see if one is missing out on anything whereas if you're attempting to access it to find specific information, check-in on a peer who's been sick, or share recent pics of your children with relatives, for instance.

iii. Spend more time with offline friends

- To be content and thriving, we all require the presence of people in person. When used effectively, social media is an excellent instrument for fostering in-person interactions. There are several methods to forge deeper relationships sans relying on social media, though, whether you've let online connections take over the role of in-person connections in your lifetime.

  o **Set aside time every week to communicate with friends and family in person:**
  Make an effort to create it a frequent gathering where you can always turn off your devices.

  o **Contact an old buddy (or an internet acquaintance) and set up a meeting if you've ignored your in-person relationships:**
  Suggest going on chores or working out together since you both have hectic schedules.

  o **Join a group:**
  Find a pastime, a creative project, or a physical activity you are similar to, and establish a community of like-minded people who gather frequently.

  o **Avoid letting your social awkwardness get in the way:**
  There are tried-and-true methods for overcoming shyness and forming relationships, even if you are one.

  o **Seek out acquaintances if one doesn't feel like they have somebody to spend quality time with:**
  Be the one to start the conversation since many other individuals have the same anxiety you do while establishing new acquaintances. Ask a colleague for lunch, or ask a friend from school or your neighbor to meet you for coffee.

  o **Engage with unrelated people:**
  Try looking up from your device and make eye contact with folks you pass on the street or at a coffee house or supermarket. You can feel so much better by merely grinning or greeting people, and you never know where it might lead. Obviously, all the while keeping one's safety in mind.

iv. **Express gratitude**

- The hatred, hostility, and unhappiness that social media may occasionally produce could be relieved by experiencing and communicating thankfulness for the significant aspects of life.

  o **Spend some time thinking:**
  Consider utilizing a thankfulness app or maintaining a thankfulness notebook. Maintain a track of all your wonderful experiences and blessings, and the things or people you'd

miss if they disappeared overnight. One could even show one's thankfulness on social media if one like to gripe or publish bad things, but one might find that solitary reflection away from the prying eyes of another is more beneficial.

- **Engage in meditation:**

  You continue to focus on life's disappointments and frustrations when you experience FOMO and compare yourself negatively to others. You're preoccupied with the "what ifs" and "if only's" that keep you from living the good life you have seen on social networking sites rather than being totally present. You may find a way to live more often in the present by engaging in mindfulness practices, which can also help you cope with FOMO and enhance one's general mental health.

- **Volunteering:**

  Humans are tough in seeking out social connections, just as we are hard-wired to help others. Helping others or creatures helps you feel better and more appreciative while also improving your neighborhood and advancing a subject that matters to oneself.

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