

SF Journal of Psychiatry and Behavioral Health

The Association between Social Media, Depression and Life Satisfaction among Young

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Abstract

The current study examines the relationship between social networks in outbreaks of depression and life satisfaction. The population of the study was the married students of Islamic Azad University of Sari in which 379 people were selected as the sample by using stratified simple random sampling method. The research method was descriptive and correlational.

Social networking, depression and life satisfaction questionnaires were used to collect data. To analyze the data, descriptive statistics using frequency indices, percentage and diagram which describe the studies variables and inferential statistics using Pearson correlation coefficient regression which examine the hypotheses of the study were used. The findings suggest that given the significant level of less than 0.05, the hypotheses of the study are confirmed and it was concluded that social networks are related to depression and life satisfaction.

Keywords: Social networking; Depression; Life satisfaction

Introduction

The research results have proved a close relationship between overuse of social media and depression. Social media users were more lonely and depressed relative to those users who had no dependence on social media [1]. Overuse of internet, in particular social media would lead to negative psychological experiences including depression, anger, and irritability [2]. Moreover, overuse of social media is along with reduced family relationships, increased depression and retreated real life [3].

On the other hand, life satisfaction is a key factor for positive mental development in the youth. As one of mental health indicators, the concept of life satisfaction is defined based on the individual and achieved goals. This means that every person evaluates the quality of life based on his or her own criteria. Louise, (2011) [4], Life satisfaction is considered as a part of perceived quality of life as well as the sense of wellbeing, which is defined as personal and perceptual evaluation by every person about his/her position in terms of different aspects.

According to the research results and vital role of social media in quality of life, cyberspace and internet can be problematic in this case. Internet is one of mass media used by humans in current era leading to accurate, fast and expanded communications that has made this planet as a global village.

The term "Cyberspace" was introduced in science fiction novel of "Necromancer" in 1984 by "William Gibson". This term was used to describe the imaginary space where, words, relationships, data, wealth and power were appeared through communications *via* computer [5]. Literally, cyberspace means a set of inner human connections through computer and communicational devices regardless of physical geography. Such space is highly widespread so that any person or group can enter to it if having required backgrounds and tools. Accordingly, this space in fact is a kind of public sphere that is defined by Habermas as a non-force discourse or conversation territory focused on a practical agreement.

Turker (1995, quoted from [6]) believes that individuals create a virtual reality considering multiple capacities of internet to meet their needs including socialization, accessibility to friendship and empathy, and forgetting problems existing in real world. Therefore, real experiences are replaced

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Received Date: 11 Dec 2020

Accepted Date: 15 Feb 2021

Published Date: 19 Feb 2021

Citation: Nikpour G, Nikpour F, Aslammehr T, Gharibzadeh S. The Association between Social Media, Depression and Life Satisfaction among Young. *SF J Psychiatry Behav Health*. 2021; 4(1): 1022.

ISSN 2643-802X

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with internet in cyber space; however, the virtual world is highly binding than the real world and people expect more achievements through internet compared with the real world; hence, they gradually distance from real life by living in cyberspace [6].

The so-called virtual space, which is not in fact an unreal or imaginary space, has a deniable effect on all of cognitive dimensions in human leading to a new culture by expansion of internet and media tools including the advent of weblogs. According to Mohu (2007) [6], we are living in a new media world that its spine, language and scope are computer network, digital technology and global distribution, respectively.

Internet database are now called social networks, which their members have access to information of other members, become familiar with their interests, share textual, audio and video contents, and create some groups with common interests in order to interact with other group members [7]. Moreover, web-based social networks are new generations of web-based facilities, which have received a considerable attention of internet users. Such sites work based on the online communities that gather some of internet users with common interests and characteristics.

Indeed, networks are social media creating new connection ways and informational strategies on internet. Hundred millions of internet users are members of hundreds of various social networks doing many of their daily activities *via* these networks [8].

Some networks such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc., are virtual social networks that have grown rapidly over short time and have become popular among people. As users of social networks use them to make connection with many of other users, it may lead to overuse of such networks particularly among the youth and their interest in making relationship within the virtual space, which may be a threat against their mental health. Depression is one of common disorders caused by social networks overuse.

According to the above mentioned issues and problems caused by misuse of social networks, appropriate use of them can create life satisfaction. In fact, life satisfaction is a process in which, people assess the quality of their lives based on the own standards that reflect the difference between desires, expectations and demands of any person at their current situation. Different studies have been conducted on the association between life satisfaction and psychological disorders indicating a significant relationship between life satisfaction and many of mental diseases as well as poor social support [9].

Yazdanshenas and colleagues (2012) [10] carried out a study and found a significant correlation between life satisfaction and health indicators including depression, interpersonal sensitivity and social support networks. According to the results obtained from mentioned studies, the question raised here is how and when virtual space or social networks can perform as an opportunity (creating life satisfaction) or a challenge (occurring depression disorder).

Method

This is a correlational research, which is defined as a study about the relationships between two or more quantitative variables by using correlation coefficient. The effect of variables is not studied and manipulated in a correlational research but the relationship between them is studied. Statistical population of this study comprised 379 married students of Azad University Sari Branch. Simple random sampling was used to choose sample. Sample size was calculated

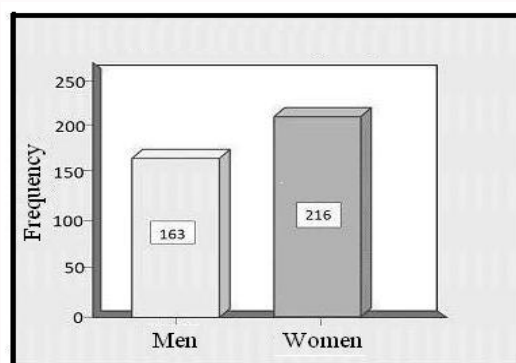


Figure 1: Frequency distribution and percentage distribution of the samples based on gender.

using Karajsi and Morgan table. In this case, 379 students ($n=379$) were selected randomly from 10897 students of Azad University Sari Branch; they filled out three questionnaires of Diner's. The Satisfaction with Life Scale, Beck's Depression Inventory, and Rubin's Social Network Questionnaire. Then, the collected data from questionnaires were analyzed statistically.

Results

Convert data to information to test hypotheses and answer questions so that it can pursue the main and secondary goals of research.

Data descriptive analysis

The findings of the Figure 1 show that 43 percentage of the repliers was men students and 57 percentage was women students.

The findings of the Table and Figure 2 shows that 31.7 percent of the age of the repliers was 18-22 years, 6.9 percent was 23-27 years, 10.3 percent was 28-32 and 51.3 percent was 32 above.

To test research hypotheses, the results obtained from Pearson correlation coefficient were analyzed statistically.

Hypothesis 1: There is an association between social networks and depression (Table 1).

According to confidence level of 0.95 and significance level of Pearson correlation coefficient ($\text{Sig}=0.00$) that is less than default value of $\alpha=0.05$, null hypothesis (lack of association between social networks and depression) is rejected and hypothesis 1 (the relationship between social networks and depression) is accepted. In other words, it is concluded that there is a significant association

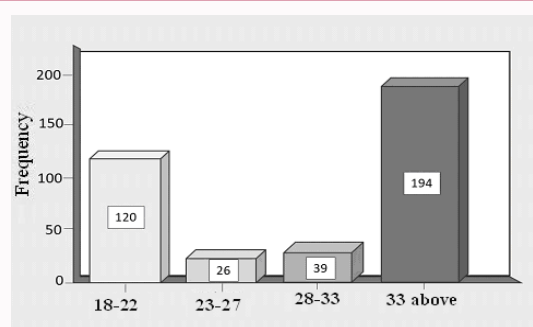


Figure 2: Frequency distribution and percentage distribution of the samples based on age.

Table 1: Results of Pearson correlation coefficient between social networks and depression.

Statistical index	Number	Correlation coefficient	Sig.
Variable			
Social networks and depression	379	0.88	0.00

Table 2: Results of Pearson correlation coefficient between social networks and life satisfaction.

Statistical index	Number	Correlation coefficient	Sig.
Variable			
Social networks and depression	379	-0.50	0.01

Table 3: Results of multivariate regression analysis.

Indicators	Non-standardized coefficients	Standard Error	B coefficients	T	Sig.
Variable					
Constant value	51.56	1.66	-	38.53	0.00
Virtual networks	0.20	0.01	-0.50	-11.40	1.00

between social networks and depression. As the obtained correlation coefficient is positive, these two variables will be changed in same direction so that an increase in use of virtual networks leads to rise in depression rate in students.

Hypothesis 2: There is an association between social networks and life satisfaction (Table 2).

According to confidence level of 0.95 and significance level of Pearson correlation coefficient (Sig=0.00) that is less than default value of $\alpha=0.05$, null hypothesis (lack of association between social networks and life satisfaction) is rejected and hypothesis 1 (the relationship between social networks and life satisfaction) is accepted. In other words, it is concluded that there is a significant association between social networks and life satisfaction. As the obtained correlation coefficient is negative, these two variables will be changed in reverse direction so that an increase in use of virtual networks leads to reduction in depression among students (Table 3).

According to the regression analysis results and significance level of 0.00 at confidence level of 99% ($\alpha=0.01$), the following results were obtained.

The variable “virtual networks” is significant to predict students’ life satisfaction at confidence level of 99% ($\alpha=0.01$) (Sig<0.01). The results obtained from regression coefficients indicate that virtual networks can explain 0.50 of life satisfaction changes.

Discussion and Conclusion

The data obtained from data analysis proved a significant relationship between social networks and depression. This finding is in line with results achieved by Yamahan et al. (2010) [11], Lenhart and Madden (2010) [12], Anderson (2001) [13], Sajadian et al. (2011) [14], Barat Dastjerdi and Sayyadi (2014) [8], Susan (2019) [15]. This conformity exists as virtual space of internet and its exciting imaginary world (in accordance with Tamnison) allows users to create a character for themselves, which may lead to an involuntary life in space and time.

World of imaginations is full of mental and neural excitements and impulses, which are not accessible in real world. The constantly changing mental space of internet influence the mental balance of users creating some pressures on user, while such pressures are not

real and are created in virtual world of internet. Spending time in chatrooms, using e-mails and visual connections include a secret and hidden nature without knowing what kind of values, attitudes or contents are exchanged between users.

Users’ depression may be a kind of contractual inability caused by the connection with a world beyond the imagination. Internet users may not be aware of their depression and may not accept such disorder; however, the nature of virtual networks works in a way that attracts the whole attention of user. Internet field admits that use of virtual networks and internet can take a long time of users making them isolated in either home or workplace.

A young person can find real affairs and success by living in the real world and making relationship with other people and doing various activities; this case occurs while the person interacting with environment despite a certain border exists. Nevertheless, such person cannot make intimate relationship with others when using virtual social media. According to the research findings, it seems that social world should be considered as one of main characteristics of future society [8]. The above mentioned points show that internet networks overuse makes an addiction in users by creating imaginary attractions, which may meet their mental and emotional needs.

Overuse of internet and virtual networks leads to lack of mental-social growth, lack of ordinary group experiences with peers, behavioral disorders, and isolation. Therefore, if physical presence and interaction with people in real world is replaced with social networks, social and emotional communications of users will not grow.

Furthermore, the obtained results proved a significant relationship between social networks and life satisfaction. This finding is matched with results obtained by Xi Zou et al., (2015) [16], Chaeyoon Lime et al., (2010) [17] and Ranjbar et al., (2015) [9]. This conformity exists as life satisfaction is defined as individual awareness and cognitive evaluation of quality of life, which may reflect a general assessment as well as evaluation of specific life scopes (family, self, etc). The research results imply the significant association between life satisfaction and some of psychological behaviors and moods such as depression, self-esteem, and hope; moreover, life satisfaction indicates the successful adjustment with changing life situations [18]. Hence, psychological adjustment in a positive approach includes two positive and negative components: being satisfied with life and lack of psychological diseases [19].

According to the research findings, long-term use of social networks and internet affects the life satisfaction in a way that the longer the hours spent in virtual networks, the more the dissatisfaction with life will be seen in people. According to the results obtained from studies conducted by Xi Zou et al., (2015) [16], dissatisfaction with life may affects the mental health of individuals leading to depression and interpersonal sensitivities in social networks-addicted people; in addition, such dissatisfaction may cause sense of loneliness in accordance with related studies [20].

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