



Social Media Self-Awareness in Adolescents

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Introduction

Social media has become a primary method of communication and information acquisition among adolescents. While a useful too, it can also affect identity development as well as affiliations and quality of friendship (Spies Shapiro, et al., 2013).

Some motivational themes for social media use include: online relationships with peers, emotional enhancement, idealization of self and others, peer comparison and validation, and functionality (Throuvala, et al., 2019).

While many themes seem to have a positive context, they also appear to have a negative, underlying drawback. As social media use has increased among younger populations, its effects on mental health have been questioned and are of interest as these populations continue to grow and develop.

Because of its new presence, its direct link to mental health outcomes is still uncertain. Understanding the themes presented, we wanted to study adolescents' perceptions of social media and their own self-awareness of its consequent effects.

Our participants included inpatient pediatric acute psychiatric patients, ages 13-18, staying in the Generose 1W unit at Saint Mary's Hospital of Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN. These participants were treated for varying mental health conditions, there were 44 participants in total. In analysis and application, The Recovery Approach to Recovery supports the idea that individuals move towards an ideal life by having purpose, hope, coping strategies, social support and self-management (Spandler, et al., 2007).

Our research question is: Do adolescents at GE1W demonstrate self-awareness in a social media context?

Methods

Our research was conducted during weekly group meetings at GE1W in small group sessions. Participants were welcomed with an origami activity and presented with a survey about personal admittance, social media use and perception.

After the survey was completed, a story about a social media situation was read aloud and discussed. Participants were encouraged to highlight resonating statements as well as share relevant experiences.

Finally, participants wrote a letter discussing how they may have related to the short story and what advice they may have given the subject. Additionally, participants were encouraged to write advice they may have. These letters were then given back to them at a later time so they may re-read and apply their own advice and words of affirmation and encouragement.

Results

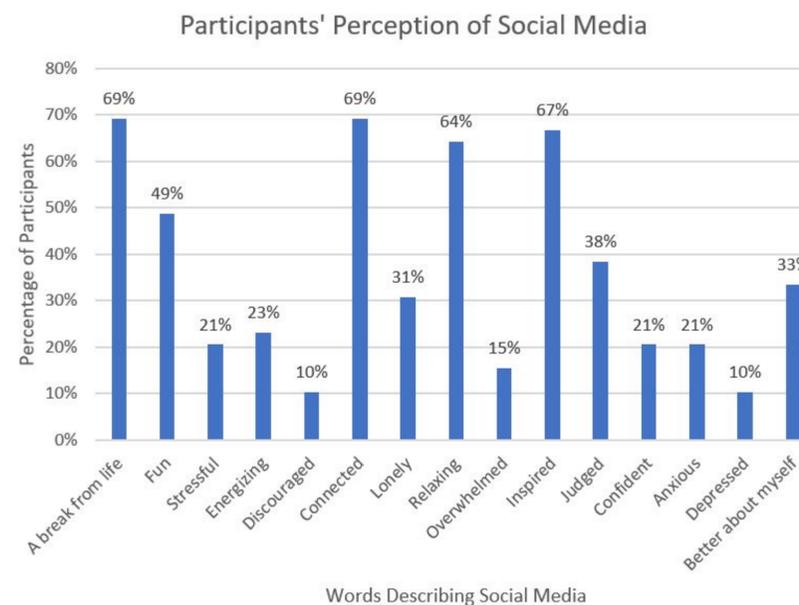


Figure 1: The graph above shows the participants' responses to a survey question. They were asked to identify words they related to regarding social media and their perception of it.

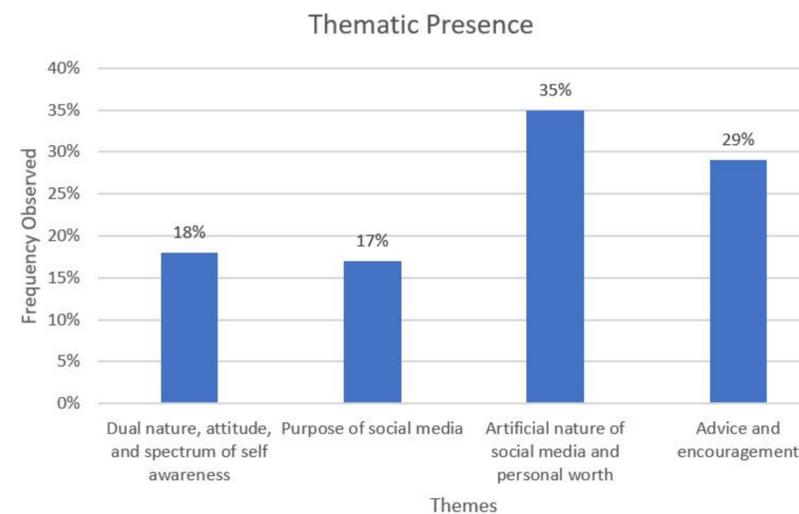


Figure 2: The graph above depicts the frequency of our themes in the participants' responses. The responses analyzed included letter writing, free response, and relative statements from the sample story.

Discussion

The results of our study show that there is a spectrum of self-awareness in social media usage. Some participants believed social media to be a positive tool used for communication and a method to learn new concepts, while others saw both negative and positive aspects of the online media.

Participants responses were coded into themes that reflected their perceptions and self-awareness of social media. Themes included: Dual nature, attitude, and spectrum of self-awareness, purpose of social media, artificial nature of social media and personal worth, and advice and encouragement. These themes, that directly relate to the components of recovery, were found in almost all participant responses at a noticeable level.

Of the total 44 participants, 86% were able to demonstrate recognition of the dual nature of social media, while 88% were able to recognize its artificial nature. Additionally, most participants were able to identify strategies for a more positive experience to alleviate some of the drawbacks they may have experienced.

These results directly correlate to the key components of the Recovery Approach to Recovery in providing the participants with purpose and meaning, development of tools or coping strategies, social support from one another and a general sense of hope as a result.

Components of Recovery

- Sense of hope for the future
- Having a sense of purpose and meaning
- Social support
- Development of coping strategies and self management

Figure 3: Recovery Approach Theory (Spandler et al., 2007)

Common tools reflected coping strategies as well as manners of self-management. Frequent tools mentioned included taking a break from social media, focus on oneself rather than comparison to others, and self assurance.

References

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Throuvala, M. A., Griffiths, M. D., Renoldson, M., & Kuss, D. J. (2019). Motivational processes and dysfunctional mechanisms of social media use among adolescents: A qualitative focus group study. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 93, 164-175. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2018.12.012>