Social Media and Happiness: Analytical Essay

With advances in technology comes increased opportunity for the use of social media though the internet. In recent years, sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube have become increasingly popular around the world with billions of users. The internet does not discriminate, with users young enough to hold a mobile device. As long as you have internet connection, you can connect using just about any modern device in today's society. With so many people plugged into social media sites in recent years, researchers have increasingly examined the effects that these sites can have on people and their mental health.

Happiness and the use of social media were examined by Duan, and Dholakia (2017), in their research, consisting of 112 undergraduate students of which 51 were female and 61 were male, with the average age of 18.12, researchers surveyed participants about their social media use when it came to sharing a purchase they had made. Participants were asked to think about an important purchase they had made in the last six months and whether they took to social media to share this purchase. Of those surveyed, 25.9% of participants reported sharing a recent purchase. The participants where then asked to answer how happy the purchase made them and how the purchase contributed to their happiness in life on a seven point likert scale, ranging from, not at all, moderately and extremely. The results were significant for posting a purchase on social media and happiness, which concluded that posting an important purchase on social media was a predictor for happiness (Duan & Dholakia, 2017).

In another study conducted by Davila et.al. (2012), researchers hypothesized that people prone to depressive rumination would be more likely to use social media due to their dependent nature and have negative experiences because of their interpersonal problems. Both online activities such as social media and instant messaging along with text messages were measured for this study of 384 young adults enrolled in an introductory psychology course with an average age of 20.22. Participants were to answer whether they participated in each platform and for how long, and then asked to rate how positive their interactions were on a seven point likert scale ranging from, not at all positive to extremely positive. Finally, participants were asked to rate how down or depressed they felt after these interactions with 1 being never and 7 being all the time. Researchers did not find a significant correlation between time spend engaging in social networking and depressive symptoms. However depressive symptoms were correlated with more negative interactions, which also lead to greater depressed mood following interactions. This research shows that it was not the time spent on social media platforms, but how the user intended to use social media that predicted a depressed mood (Davila et.al., 2012).

On the contrary, other researchers found that using social media in a positive way, was associated with positive well-being. In a study conducted by Kim and Lee (2011), investigating positive self-presentation and well-being, and honest self-presentations and well-being, researchers surveyed 391 students, 28.1% of which were male and 71.9% female, at a large University in the Midwest, all of which used Facebook. Positive self-presentation was measured with statements such as, " I avoid writing negative things that happen to me when I update my status" and " I post photos that only show the happy side of me'' (Kim & Lee, 2011). Honest self-presentation was measured with statements like, ''I freely reveal negative emotions I feel—for example, sadness, anxiety, or anger'' and ''I don't mind writing about bad things that

happen to me when I update my status'' (Kim & Lee, 2011). They found that positive self-presentation on Facebook was related to a higher rate of well-being. When it came to honest portrayal of self, researchers found that Facebook users felt more social support when they updated statuses expressing how they really felt. From this research we see how portraying a positive and honest self can enhance happiness and well-being (Kim & Lee, 2011).

Past evidence suggests that sharing important purchases and portraying a positive and honest self on social media, are related to happiness (Duan & Dholakia, 2017) & (Kim & Lee, 2011). Other research shows that people that who intended to use social media in a less positive matter reported higher levels of depressive symptoms. The current study will examine the quantity of social media applications used and their effects on happiness.

Happiness

In 2010, Salman Akhtar wrote a study defining what happiness was and critically analyzing and reflecting the happiness work of five other psychologist and their views of what they thought and concluded with what happiness actually is. Akhtar (2010) critically reviewed what Freud said about happiness and bashing his views that included psychoanalytic work stating that happiness is something that is not continuous or complete rather than happiness is something that has to do with instinct rather than actually being content (Akhtar 2010). Agreeing that Freud in this instance is undeniably wrong because it has been proven that happiness is not an instinct rather than a behavioral trait that comes from what a person needs and wants to stay content. Then in an insulting manner, Akhtar (2010) refers to Freuds work, along with other psychoanalytic's, that they do not assure happiness is something that is in peoples everyday lives when in other studies it has been proven otherwise (Akhtar 2010). In his review, he goes on and criticizes the other psychologists he thinks have gotten the definition of happiness concluding that he found happiness can be broken up into four parts; pleasure, joy, ecstasy, and contentment but the way the past psychologists have framed all that have been stating information that has been proven wrong about their studies about happiness but they were correct in the sense that happiness can home in many forms (Akhtar 2010). There are many parts to happiness but along the years of recent studies it has been changed. What has been added to the list of happiness include relationships, culture and money which contributes to the relationship with happiness during this generation (Akhtar 2010). It is obvious that relationships between family, friends and a significant other are very important to happiness because people need to socialize and with socialization, with the right people, can create happiness. Culture is another important way to gain happiness because people can be surrounded with what makes them happy. Lastly money is a factor to happiness and it has been argued that money should not bring happiness but in reality for this generation that is so absorbed with materialistic things that make them happy, it does but it is a way of cheating happiness because it's basically bought. Sadly, this was not the case several generations ago with money buying happiness but like happiness itself, it changes.

In 2012, Parks, Zilca, Della Porta, Pierce, and Lyubomirsky conducted a study about people seeking happiness through the Internet. They have acquired that happiness is an important long-term life goal shared between many people (Parks, Zilca, Della Porta, Pierce, & Lyubomirsky 2012). There are people out there trying to find their happiness through anything and the one thing they have eluted to would be finding happiness through the Internet. The study shows different cases where people where given something to do on the Internet and the researchers

then measured their happiness before and after the use of the Internet (Parks et al. 2012). Even though it seems that people would be happy with using the Internet, it does not apply to every person. Some people find happiness outside the Internet and just use the Internet when needed, not for a key to their happiness.

The Affects of Social Media Use

A study conducted by Andreassen et al. in 2016 about the excessive use of social media and gaming can cause symptoms of psychiatrist disorders. They defined addiction to the excessive use of technology to be harming to individuals causing them to develop psychiatric symptoms such as ADHD, OCD, depression and anxiety. Furthermore, Andreassen (2016) found that social media was more additive than video games in context to the development of psychiatric disorders. This shows that the extended use of social media can be much more harming than the extended use of video games when it comes to ADHD, OCD, depression and anxiety. Nonetheless, this study found the correlation between anxiety and depression to be related to the addictive use of technology (Andreassen et al. 2016). In other words, social media has been related to symptoms of anxiety and depression when an individual has overused it. Andreassen et al. (2016) came to the conclusion that their study presented the association between the symptoms of a psychiatric disorder and addictive use of social media and gaming to be correlated with one another.

Understanding the addictive nature of social media can affect an individuals well-being in either a negative or positive way. In a study formed by Tobin and Chulpaiboon (2016), they researched the satisfaction of posting photographs on Instagram. Their study showed that individuals that posted pictures of themselves with people they were acquainted to showed higher levels of satisfaction (Tobin and Chulpaiboon, 2016). Therefore the behavior when posting a picture that satisfies the individual that posted it must how signs of content. This means that posting pictures on Instagram makes them happy. Since posting a picture on Instagram has been found to be satisfying, what Tobin and Chulpaiboon (2016) also found that receiving more comments from a recent post also raises the happiness level on the individual that originally posted the picture. This may be because of the association between posting a picture on Instagram and receiving positive feedback on the picture that has been posted. Unfortunately for this study, there was no mention of what the findings were if the comments from a recent post were negative.

Methods

The purpose of this quantitative survey study is to test the theory that there is a correlation between social media usage and happiness. The participants are adults of all ages. Both males and females were included in the survey. The independent variable will be defined as social media usage. The dependent variable will be defined as the participant’s level of happiness before social media usage and following social media usage. An intervening variable is the frequency and amount of time the participant spends on social media. Another intervening variable considered is the type of social media sites used. Whether the participant has been to therapy is another intervening variable we considered during this study because therapy may impact or increase the level of happiness as well.

The survey was distributed electronically to those using social media platforms and paper

format to reach more students and faculty at Hope International University as well as randomized participants. Happiness was defined as the participant's level of positive or negative feelings reported. The respondent's answer indicating current level of happiness was correlated with social media use. Our theoretic assumption was that social media can both positively or negatively affect an individual's feelings dependent on the type of social media content the individual is using. Since the study includes adults of all ages and genders, age and gender are variables. The survey asks the participant the time of day, such as at waking or bedtime that social media is used, if any. Among other variables, another variable was if purchases were made during social media usage.

References

1. Andreassen, C. S., Billieux, J., Griffths, D. M., Kuss, D. J., Demetrovics, Z., Mazzoni, E., Pallesen, S. (2016). The Relationship Between Addictive Use of Social Media and Video Game and Symptoms of Psychiatric Disorders: A Large-Scale Cross-Sectional Study. Psychology of Addictive Behaviors, 30(2), 252-262.
2. Akhtar, S. (2010). Happiness: Origins, forms, and technical relevance. American Journal of Psychoanalysis, 70(3), 219-44. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/ajp.2010.13
3. Davila, J., Hershenberg, R., Feinstein, B. A., Gorman, K., Bhatia, V., & Starr, L. R. (2012). Frequency and quality of social networking among young adults: Associations with depressive symptoms, rumination, and corumination. Psychology of popular media culture, 1(2), 72.
4. Duan, J., & Dholakia, R. R. (2017). Posting purchases on social media increases happiness: the mediating roles of purchases' impact on self and interpersonal relationships. Journal of Consumer Marketing, 34(5), 404-413.
5. Kim, J., & Lee, J. E. R. (2011). The Facebook paths to happiness: Effects of the number of Facebook friends and self-presentation on subjective well-being. CyberPsychology, behavior, and social networking, 14(6), 359-364.
6. Parks, A. C., Zilca, R., Della Porta, M. D., Pierce, R. S., & Lyubomirski, S. (2012). Pursuing Happiness in Everyday Life: The Characteristics and Behaviors of Online Happiness Seekers. American Psychology Association, 12(6), 1222-1234. doi: 10.1037/a0028587
7. Tobin, S. J., Chulpaiboon, P. (2016). The Role of Social Connection in Satisfaction with Instagram Photographs. Translational Issues in Psychological Science, 2(3), 303-312.