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Vander Galien, Aryn R. *The Impact of Facebook and other Social Networking Sites on Adolescents*

Abstract

Adolescents are spending much of their free time on social networking sites leaving the important question of how this new means of social connectivity is affecting them. Adolescents already face social pressures to be popular, look a certain way, and consume alcohol and other drugs. This study has reviewed the literature to answer the following research questions: How does self disclosure on social networking sites harm and benefit teenagers? What consequences are adolescents facing through exposure to Facebook?

With an increased amount of technology readily available literature can also answer the question as to how Facebook and other social networking sites impact education. Countless programs and changes can be made to the educational environment to utilize this influx of technology for educational purposes and manage what dangers it may hold within school walls.

School counselors, educators, and administrators face the challenge of how to harness social networking sites for the benefit of supplementing classroom lessons. However, there are dangers of privacy, distraction, and misuse of social networking sites in classroom activities.

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Chapter I: Introduction

The popularity of Facebook and social networking sites is constantly expanding, which means that the involvement of adolescents in these sites is also increasing. A reported 73% of teens are active participants on a social networking site (SNS) (Thomas, 2012). Social networking sites such as Facebook do not allow adolescents under the age of 13 to create a profile on their website, yet 45% of 12 year-olds report having an account on a SNS (Lenhart, Madden, Smith, Purcell, Zickuhr, & Rainie, 2011). This figure nearly doubles when adolescents turn 13 as 82% of young people report that they are using social networking sites such as Facebook (Lenhart et al., 2011). The use of Facebook to stay updated on the happenings in others' lives is becoming a typical activity in daily life, with approximately 70% of teens reporting that they go online daily (Lenhart et al., 2011).

Adolescents reported spending time on social networking sites has become an important tool for building relationships and develop a sense of self and community (Niemer, 2012). According to reports, male and female adolescents between the ages of 13 to 17 spend an average of 2 hours and 20 minutes online with 80% of that time being devoted to SNS. A surprising 48% of adolescents believed they spent too much of their time online (Niemer, 2012). Using Facebook as a tool for communication has become increasingly important among teenagers, 42% of teens report sending messages through Facebook on a daily basis (Niemer, 2012). Adolescents have focused their attention on SNS due to the opportunity of extending social worlds and gaining independence (Ito, Horst, Bittani, Boyd, Herr-Stephenson, Lang, Pascoe, & Robinson, 2008). Professor Larry Rosen explains that social networking sites is not just a part of an adolescent's social life, it is their social life (Niemer, 2012).

Social networking sites have created new opportunities for adolescents to explore their interests, learn new skills in technology, and pave the way to self-expression (Ito et al, 2008). Niemer (2012) stated that research shows the negative harms of social media are being overshadowed by the positive benefits. Teens are using social networking to extend their offline friendships and social connections (Ito et al., 2012). Research demonstrated that adolescents who have more friends on Facebook predicted lower levels of depression. Social networking sites have given shy teens a way to learn communication skills by practicing online (Niemer, 2012). Social and emotional development, as well as technical skills, are being learned by adolescents through time spent on social networking sites (Ito et al., 2012; O’Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). O’Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson (2011) also found that adolescents can enhance their creativity, develop their ideas, and expand connections to diverse backgrounds utilizing SNS.

Additional benefits of social networking sites include the development of education in an adolescent’s life. Adolescents learn best from their peers which can be enhanced through online activity. Adults can help teens set learning goals associated with their online interests and subsequently function as a role model (Ito et al., 2012). Students learn through trial and error and the immediacy of the use of technology helps assist adolescents in self-directed learning. Educators can allow students more autonomy online which leads to increased independence (Ito et al., 2012). Giving students the power to learn on their own allows the internet to produce feedback more quickly through discussion of peers and educators. Classroom teachers are able to engage their students by using Facebook groups to encourage reflective writing and post surveys and discussions for other students to respond to (Swan, 2013). Involving students in

working with social networking platforms like Facebook can help adolescents understand how to appropriately interact socially on the internet (Swan, 2013).

Concerns to consider include symptoms of depression and the lack understanding online privacy issues (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). Adolescents are unaware of the issues of privacy on social networking sites. Visiting various websites can be recorded in the history of the internet browser, such as those available through Internet Explorer and Google Chrome, and leave a footprint of their activity behind (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). Many teens do not understand that information, pictures, and videos posted on the online may be on the internet forever (Niemer, 2012). Future jobs and college acceptance may be denied as a result of what is posted on social networking sites (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). Parents and educators can help reduce such risks by modeling appropriate social networking site behaviors and being involved in adolescent's social networking. Educating teenagers about privacy settings and the importance of limiting friends to people they know is important to the safety of social networking sites (Niemer, 2012).

“Facebook depression” is a new phenomenon of depression that has developed among adolescents who spend a lot of time on social networking sites. Teenagers fear social isolation have turned to risky internet behaviors for acceptance and peer contact (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). Research showed that adolescents who are more likely to spend additional time on Facebook to not be alone still exhibit the same social relationships as in real life (Sheldon, 2008). Adolescents may visit sites that promote risky or self destructive behaviors (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011) much like when teenagers involve themselves in peer groups that promote risky behaviors. Depression symptoms, as measured by the Beck Depression Inventory Scale-II, increased as the time spent on social network sites increased (Pantic et al., 2012).

Statement of the Problem

With adolescents being increasingly exposed to their peers' activity on social networking sites such as Facebook comes numerous risks. It is reported that 73% of teenagers have signed up for a social networking profile (Thomas, 2012). Thus these adolescents are being exposed to marketing ads and profiles of their peers and celebrities which can lead to lower self-esteem (Haferkamp & Kramer, 2011). Teens are using Facebook to disclose feelings of depression (Bramsfeld et al., 2006) and are generally self disclosing a great deal of information about themselves. Along with the disclosure comes the observation of peers on individual's activities such as consumption of alcohol. When young adolescents see the consumption of alcohol, they tend to assume that it is normative behavior and that it is acceptable to participate (Litt & Stock, 2011). Additionally, the utilization of Facebook can have positive and negative effects on adolescents' academics. Facebook can contribute to class discussions (Hurt, N. E., Moss, G.S., Bradley, C.L., Larson, L.R., Lovelace, M.D., & Prevost, L.B., 2012) and can also distract students from focusing appropriately on their homework (Rouis, Limayem, & Salehi-Sangari, 2011).

Purpose of the Study

The intent of this study was to investigate how Facebook can influence adolescents who participate in social networking sites. A comprehensive review of available literature was completed during the fall semester of 2012 and the spring semester of 2013 at a small Midwestern university. The goal of this research was to enhance the research on the affects of Facebook by reviewing the literature available online and through research journals. It is important to understand the rewards and consequences teenagers experience through

participation in online social networking. Creating a compilation of research will help parents and educators become aware of the affects of adolescent involvement on Facebook.

Research Questions

The following research aims to utilize a literature review to answer a series of questions pertaining to the affects Facebook and other social networking sites have on adolescents.

1. How does self disclosure on Facebook harm and benefit teenagers?
2. What consequences are adolescents facing through exposure to Facebook?
3. How do Facebook and other social networking sites impact education?

Definition of Terms

The current research contains the following terms, which are defined to assist in the ease of understanding while reading the literature review.

Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC). Communication that occurs through the use of computers as opposed to communication in person or through a phone is called computer-mediated communication.

Facebook. Is a specific social networking site where individuals can share thoughts and pictures with others.

Friend. The term friend can be utilized in two different ways. One definition of the term includes the individuals who have been granted permission to actively view and comment on a personal social networking account. The second term is the act of allowing someone to become your friend on Facebook.

News Feed. The news feed is the homepage of Facebook where updates of friends' status' and pictures is constantly updated to show new information being posted at any given minute.

Post (also Wall Post). A post is a comment written on an individual's Facebook and can include a personal update, a question or statement to a friend, or even a picture or a link to another website.

Profile. The profile is the portion of a social networking site that gives personal information to others on the website. A Facebook profile contains a list of friends an individual has, an album of pictures that that individual is in, as well as demographic information that person has chosen to reveal about oneself. In addition, this page also has any status updates or comments from friends listed in chronological order of when it was posted.

Profile Picture. A profile picture is chosen to be the picture seen by any member of a social networking site. On Facebook that picture shows up next to your name on anything posted by that individual.

Social Networking Site (SNS). A social networking site is an online community where a website becomes a place to network to build relationships with past and present friends, family, classmates, co-workers, etc. Individuals build an image of who they are to share with others and thus communicate to others through the website.

Status Update. Is a personal reflection about what an individual is thinking or performing and can include the place one is at and whom that individual is with.

Tag. A tag is an identification of who is included in a Facebook picture or post.

User. A user is an individual who participates in a social networking site.

Wall. The wall is the portion of Facebook where a user's updates are posted as well as the location on Facebook where a friend can write a comment or statement.

Assumptions and Limitations

The assumptions made upon completing this literature review are that Facebook has many negative consequences and research has not established positive aspects of Facebook. A crucial assumption is that the majority of adolescents have a Facebook account that they utilize frequently. Limitations of the study that have been considered are the vast availability of research completed on Facebook. A limitation that reveals itself often when studying adolescents is that the need to obtain parental and child consent limit the research available on this age group and emphasize the research completed on individuals over the age of eighteen.

Chapter II: Literature Review

The content of this chapter will include information regarding the benefits and consequences adolescents acquire by self disclosing information on Facebook. Teenagers also run into the risk of social consequences by participating in social networking sites such as Facebook. Among these consequences are loneliness, low self-esteem, depression, and increased likelihood of participating in underage drinking behaviors.

Self Disclosure: How Much is too Much?

With Facebook growing rapidly at an amazing rate of almost five million new users a week (Hempel, 2009), and with adolescents as young as fourteen years old being allowed to begin a Facebook account (Fodeman & Monroe, 2009), the information being disclosed on Facebook can be frightening.

Facts of disclosure. Many adolescents do not realize that the things they post online are not truly private (Fodeman & Monroe, 2009). A survey conducted by Kite, Gable, and Filippelli (2010) asked a sample of middle school students a variety of questions based on internet predators and self-disclosure on social networking sites. Among the participants in the survey 37% reported that they felt it would be possible for an internet predator to locate them based on the information they had posted on a social networking site (Kite et al., 2010). This statistic is alarming in two ways. One, 37% of the adolescents realized that they can be found, yet have critically identifying information posted on their social networking site. Two, 63% did not think that they could be found based on the information provided or were not sure. One can easily question if the adolescent believed he or she is invincible or they have not provided that sort of information online. The other startling question that comes from this research is the 25% of respondents who did not know if they could be found based on the information given (Kite et al.,

2010). This research highlighted that students need to be educated in the significance of what they self-disclose online.

Self-report studies show that Facebook users are significantly more likely to disclose personal information via a social networking site (SNS) than in any other form of communication (Christofides, Muise, & Desmarais, 2009). In a study conducted by Christofides et al. (2009), 76% of respondents stated that it was at least somewhat important to them to control who sees their information, however Fodeman and Monroe (2009) found that teens friend 44-87% of the strangers who request to be their friend on Facebook. Pictures, status updates, and wall posts are readily available to those who have been added as a friend, giving those individuals access to the personal thoughts one posts, as well as posts and pictures from others. Adolescents may only think of their close friends as the audience for their status updates; however they can also overlook the eyes of strangers. This may account for the discrepancy of Facebook users reporting the desire to keep information private and being likely to disclose personal details (Christofides et al., 2009).

Social enhancements of self-disclosure. Social networking sites such as Facebook ask for demographics of all of its users, including where they go to school, where they work, their address, phone number, e-mail address, birth date, and also prompt users to post a profile picture of themselves. Many individuals use this space to give others personal information. This information disclosure can be dangerous to persons of all ages, allowing someone to know their age and address. There are many explanations as to why adolescents would post this data. Again, it can be the lack of realizing that the audience for personal information is outside ones group of friends who have face-to-face interactions with the user, however Zhao, Grasmuck, and Martin (2008) have explored additional explanations. Zhao et al. (2008) found that the

information posted on social networking sites are the socially desirable identities of the individuals who create their profile. In the research completed by Christofides et al. (2009), adolescents reported that the exposure of their Facebook environment provides an outlet for the need to be popular. Together, an identity can be created by sharing personal information such as photos and interests and can be a social product of what others post about the user as well. Disclosure then becomes a part of the online social identity of the adolescent seeking acceptance and popularity (Christofides et al., 2009).

Utilizing self disclosure on social networking sites stimulates not only an adolescent's popularity, but their social connectedness as well. Valkenburg and Peter (2007) found that there is a positive correlation between online self disclosure and the closeness of existing friendships. This information shows that there is a social reinforcement to disclosing information on Facebook. Valkenburg and Peter (2007) revealed that approximately 88% of adolescents use the internet to communicate with their friends, creating the ability to correspond with their peers in multiple dimensions. The availability of social networking sites has increased the social connectedness adolescents share with their companions and resulted in higher-quality friendships (Valkenburg & Peter, 2009). This social association positively affects the adolescent's well-being and can be explained by the increase of self disclosure through SNS such as Facebook (Valkenburg & Peter, 2009).

The cost of self-disclosure. Although there are some valuable social benefits to self disclosure on Facebook, there is also a down side. Fodeman and Monroe (2009) identified that consequences may develop as self disclosure increases. Among the penalties are expulsion from school, getting kicked off sports teams, denied work experiences, and rejection from colleges and universities. Many schools do not allow students participating in underage drinking to play in

sports; the publication of pictures on Facebook can be the evidence the school needs to “bench” the player. Fodeman and Monroe (2009) stated that “More than 20% of colleges and universities search social networks for their admissions candidates” (p. 37). This research showed that individuals making decisions that impact an adolescent’s future can and will look at a Facebook profile to make a judgment of how suited that individual is for their institution.

According to a survey completed by Kaplan Test Prep, 25% of the 350 admissions officers polled had looked up college applicants on Facebook or Google (Luckerson, 2012). In addition, the Kaplan Test Prep Survey also found that only 15% of universities operate under a strict social media policy when reviewing applications for their inbound students. Luckerson (2012) added that college admissions officers were reluctant to share their practices on selecting students; however they have communicated that students should be mindful of what they post. Admissions officers interviewed by Luckerson (2012) had differing opinions. Where some thought an online profile was a legitimate source of evaluable information other admissions directors relayed that Facebook is an inconsistent variable in a regimented application process (Luckerson, 2012). Marklein (2011) found the amount of colleges exploring Facebook profiles went up since the Kaplan Test Prep survey in 2008—6% in 2008, 25% in 2012. Of the admissions officers polled, 35% reported that they had discovered something online that negatively impacted an applicant (Luckerson, 2012) in contrast to the 12% statistic reported in 2011 (Marklein, 2011).

In addition to impacting college applications, Valkenburg and Peter (2009) stated a consequence of computer-mediated communications (CMC) is a reduction in social cues such as visual, auditory, and contextual cues. This can lead adolescents to not care how their peers perceive them and reduce their inhibitions (Valkenburg & Peter, 2009) that would typically be

present in a social context with the related cues. Similarly, many adolescents reported that they would rather complete socially uncomfortable tasks such as breaking up with a significant other through forms of social media such as Facebook. These teens reported that it is easier to accomplish such interactions over Facebook than in person, leading researchers to believe that this form of avoidance will have increasingly negative costs on communications skills (Fodeman & Monroe, 2009).

Social Harms

Researchers have been interested in the many negative consequences Facebook can present to adolescents. In addition to the penalties previously discussed are social consequences such as loneliness, low self-esteem, depression, and added pressure to consume alcohol. Adolescents are exposed to multiple Facebook profiles a day and are thus observing multiple messages that can lead to negative thoughts and actions.

Group memberships. Research by Sheldon (2008) found that students who showed unwillingness-to-communicate avoidance-approach, or those who are introverted, were significantly more likely to utilize Facebook as a means to suppress feelings of loneliness. Sheldon (2008) also found that introverted individuals tended to have fewer friends on Facebook than those who are avid social communicators. Brandtzaeg (2012) reported that social network site users conveyed more loneliness than nonusers. Sheldon's (2008) results showed that adolescents who are more likely to spend additional time on Facebook to not be alone still exhibit the same social relationships as in real life. The research supported the rich-get-richer hypothesis, which indicates individuals who are extraverts are reaping the rewards of social networking sites (Sheldon, 2008). This leads to questioning if adolescents are finding social networking as another disappointment and setback in their attempts to form new friendships.

Individuals who utilize social networking sites are more likely to report loneliness than those who do not use SNS such as Facebook (Brandtzaeg, 2012). Social identity theory (SIT) reveals that a portion of an individual's self-concept lies in their group memberships (Barker, 2012). Without the support of Facebook on social group memberships, what encouragement are adolescents receiving by maintaining social networking sites? The self-evaluation the teens make of their own group involvement can foster negative self-esteem (Barker, 2012).

Self-esteem. Adolescents are already engaged in comparing themselves to those around them and adding Facebook as a source for social comparisons can lead to negative impacts in their self-esteem (Haferkamp & Kramer, 2011). Haferkamp and Kramer (2011) found that individuals who looked at attractive profile photographs had less positive emotions than their counterparts who viewed less attractive pictures. Participants reported a significant difference between how they perceived themselves and what their ideal body image was, meaning they disclosed that they were less satisfied with their own body (Haferkamp & Kramer, 2011). This research revealed that adolescents, especially females, are susceptible to greater body image issues by comparing themselves to others' Facebook pictures and profiles. Gonzales and Hancock (2011) also found that individuals who viewed others' Facebook profiles reported lower self-esteem. Combine that with the ads for weight loss products observed by Moreno et al. (2011), and Facebook can intensify self-esteem issues and body dimorphic disorders.

Depression. Depression, similar to self-esteem, can have negative health and social outcomes (Bramsfeld, Platt, & Schwartz, 2006), and often appears in adolescence. Bramsfeld et al. (2006) stated that recognition of depression is often missed and thus goes untreated and aimed to use Facebook to identify students who displayed depressive symptoms. Bramsfeld et al. (2006) did not report that Facebook could diagnose depression; however Facebook could flag

adolescents who would benefit from additional screening. Research determined that individuals who utilize the status update feature on Facebook had, on average, updated their profile within 3.2 days in contrast to those who did not exhibit depressive symptoms who were more likely to wait 6.9 days (Moreno et al., 2011). Depression symptoms, as measured by the Beck Depression Inventory Scale-II, increased as the time spent on social network sites increased (Pantic et al., 2012). Adolescents utilize Facebook as a means to disclose symptoms of depression and research showed that those who updated their recent activity on Facebook were more likely to reference depressive symptoms (Moreno et al., 2011). Moreno et al. (2011) hypothesized that these status updates could be the result of uplifting feedback from peers. Research of Facebook updates conducted by Moreno et al. (2011) revealed positive comments posted in reply to status updates that disclosed indications of depression. This display of support showed that teens are willing to encourage their comrades who display distress. Facebook has the means to be a defense against depression (Moreno et al., 2011), however if symptoms of depression go unreported, there can be detrimental consequences.

Pressure to consume alcohol. Other consequences of observing peers' Facebook profiles involve exposure to alcohol related content. Adolescents observe photos, status updates, and wall posts of their friends on Facebook on a daily basis. These observations can be made via the news feed where Facebook places updates from friends for the user to stay informed or users have the option of navigating to a friend's wall to see their recent activities and pictures. Utilizing such routes, adolescents have the opportunity to observe peers and older adolescents engaging in alcohol consumption through pictures or read comments made about alcohol. This tends to lead to the belief that a majority of older adolescents consume alcohol; Litt and Stock (2011) correlated this normative assumption with increasingly positive attitudes toward alcohol.

Research by Litt and Stock (2011) supported that adolescents perceived alcohol use among older teens as normative and typical behavior. This created more willingness to participate and increasingly favorable attitudes toward alcohol use among younger adolescents (Litt & Stock, 2011). Lit and Stock (2011) also found that there was a positive correlation of time spent on social networking sites in association with willingness to drink alcoholic beverages. These adolescents also revealed that they felt less susceptible to being caught and suffering the consequences associated with underage drinking (Litt & Stock, 2011). By viewing alcohol related posts on social networking sites, adolescents obtain a distorted image of what are typical behaviors of others, as well as the false sense of security that others illustrate by publishing information about illegal activities, reducing inhibitions of participating in similar activities.

Impact on Education

When a majority of adolescents participate in a specific activity, it is within reason to believe that their educators would be impacted by this activity as well. With 73% of teens reporting that they are active participants on a social networking site (Thomas, 2012), there is bound to be an effect on their academics and educational needs.

Facebook in the classroom. In a study conducted by Hurt et al. (2012), students reported that they would be more likely to post discussions related to their coursework on Facebook than through a conventional course website. Students reported that familiarity with Facebook was a substantial reason for preferring discussions in this format (Hurt et al., 2012). Using informal methods of communication among students can support educational objectives by connecting these students as well as educators. Using social networking sites to connect outside of the classroom allows students to collaborate, and as a result, can assist task completion (Lampe, Wohn, Vitak, Ellison, & Wash, 2011). Among the ability to collaborate was the ability

to connect with teachers and ask them questions about their homework assignments (Lampe et al., 2011). When adolescents and adults alike utilize Facebook, it opens the potential for ease of communication. Adolescents reported spending anywhere from thirty minutes to eight hours a day on Facebook and typically only spend approximately three to four minutes during each visit (Rouis et al., 2011). Given this information, one can recognize that Facebook provides a lucrative means of communication, seeing as individuals would likely receive messages in a relatively rapid manner.

Swan (2013) suggested classroom teachers engage their students by using Facebook groups to encourage reflective writing about the current topic of the lesson. Working within a Facebook group made exclusively for the classroom use would allow students to post pictures of field trips or other experiences relevant to the class (Swan, 2013). Students can post surveys and discussions for other students to respond to. Swan (2013) stated that posts created by students can create hundreds of responses in as little as a week. Swan (2013) included that involving students in working with social networking platforms like Facebook can help adolescents understand how to appropriately interact socially on the internet.

Social networking sites supplement the classroom. In addition to Facebook there are a number of additional social networking sites that are helpful to educators. According to Swan (2013) 7% of instructors reported using social networking sites to supplement classroom lessons. Students can benefit from using SNS in the classroom because they can help foster creative student collaboration (Swan, 2013). Google has designed several applications for creating and sharing documents, blogs, etc. Students can work as a team to complete assignments or create discussions that only the class can see. Also, they can invite others to join their document to collaborate with other classes internal or external to their school which can imitate real-world

experiences (Swan, 2013). There are several education-based applications that allow teachers to create discussion boards, blogs, surveys, forums, and activities for their classrooms. Such sites include Moodle, Schoology, Edmodo, ePales, LearningSpace, or MyBigCampus. Additionally, the application Voice Thread allows students to record feedback for books in the school library and make suggestions for books to be added to the school library.

Twitter is a social networking site that has increased in popularity among adolescents. The site allows individuals to place a “hashtag” (#) next to a word others can later search the word the hashtag is coupled with and identify posts and links to additional resources. Students would be able to utilize this function to learn more about current events as well as other information. They can later repost what they have learned for their classmates to see and write reflections and questions to what they learned that subject. Posts on Twitter are limited to 140 characters which causes students make their writing thoughtful and concise (Swan, 2013).

Technology has increased opportunities for students that have never been available before. Students can now connect with classes in multiple other countries. E-Pales is a global social networking site that allows students to create a community with students in one of 200 countries and connect through email, Skype, or other means of communication (Swan, 2013). Students in foreign language classes can connect with other students whose native language they are learning. Classrooms can collaborate with those in other countries and develop their ideas with the input of others insights. In addition to ePales, Livemocha is a community of language learners that allows students to get feedback from others outside the classroom. Language learners and native speakers alike can give feedback to others as they practice reading and writing skills (Swan, 2013). Technology and communities of social networking have

supplemented the ways students can learn in their own unique way and enhanced classroom learning by involving worldwide scholars.

Students can harness their creativity in the coursework by utilizing other social networking sites available to them. Students and teachers can create their own private YouTube channels by marking them as “unlisted” and sharing them with only whom they chose (Swan, 2013). Students can use videos as a creative means to share information they have learned with the class. The comment section below the video on the YouTube website allows classmates to include peer critiques of the information included (Swan, 2013).

Negative impacts on education. When analyzing the benefits of utilizing Facebook as a means of communication for educational purposes, one cannot overlook the possible controversy. Questions of privacy and availability of the instructor outside school come to mind. Additionally, there are students who chose not to utilize Facebook or other SNS or whose socio-economic status allows minimal access to a computer to visit social networking sites. It does not take research to realize that Facebook profiles contain very personal information. Students as well as teachers should be cautious about being friends on Facebook because of the sensitive matter that may be revealed in these interactions. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g) protects students’ educational records and correspondence over Facebook between students and teachers can infringe on this privacy. However, as Hurt et al. (2012) pointed out, teachers only need to take care to not discuss students’ grades or feedback from coursework over Facebook.

Although social networking sites have the ability to support students’ academics, another pressing question correlating Facebook to academics involves the effect on students’ grades. Rouis et al. (2011) determined in their research that students’ presence on social networking sites

can control their cognitions and have a negative impact on academics. Most students are unable to multitask effectively, thus their time spent immersed in Facebook holds their attention from other tasks. Even students who spend as little as five hours a week on Facebook showed a decrease in their focus on completing assignments. However, students who show self-regulation behaviors tend to control their presence on social networking sites and limit the negative effects boasted by the use of Facebook. Also, students who show multi-tasking skills revealed that their presence on Facebook did not amount to the same amount of distraction reported by other participants (Rouis et al., 2011).

Chapter III: Summary, Critical Analysis, and Recommendations

This chapter will summarize the findings of the literature review presented in Chapter II. Also included will be a critical analysis of the differing opinions on the impacts of potential benefits and harm social networking sites present to adolescents. This chapter will then conclude with recommendations for future research.

Summary

The analysis highlights the many effects that our adolescents are exposed to through the use of Facebook and other social networking sites. The amount of self disclosure and the perceived reward for self disclosure brings positives and negatives for adolescents. Research has found that self disclosure can benefit adolescents by increasing the closeness of their friendships (Valkenburg & Peter, 2007). There are also risks attached, such as not being accepted into the colleges or universities to which students apply (Fodeman & Monroe, 2009).

Additional negative social consequences were also discussed, including loneliness, low self-esteem, reports of depression, and increased influence of underage alcohol consumption. Research illustrated that adolescents who report being lonely tend to be on Facebook for longer periods of time during the day (Brandtzaeg, 2012; Sheldon, 2008;). Sheldon found that teens that are more outgoing tend to reap the rewards of Facebook in ways that are comparable to interactions off social networking sites.

With the extended use of Facebook, students are increasing their exposure to ads marketing weight loss programs (Moreno et al., 2011) and the profiles of their peers (Gonzales & Hancock, 2011; Haferkamp & Kramer, 2011). Research has found that spending time on Facebook can result in lower self-esteem (Haferkamp & Kramer, 2011).

Facebook cannot only increase low levels of self-esteem; it can also promote students to disclose depressive thoughts through their status updates (Moreno et al., 2011). Moreno et al., (2011) found that many adolescents are posting references to depressive symptoms. As a result, their peers will often post uplifting statements (Moreno et al., 2011), however, if the student does not receive the support he or she is reaching out for, the consequences could be grave.

Adolescents are also being exposed to alcohol content from their peers that could lead to an increased willingness to participate in underage alcohol consumption (Litt & Stock, 2011). Litt and Stock found that adolescents who observe older adolescents underage drinking behavior have a higher willingness to participate and increasingly favorable attitudes toward alcohol use among younger adolescents. The adolescents assume that the underage drinking is normative and consequently desire to participate in the behavior (Litt & Stock, 2011).

Facebook continues to impact adolescents in the realm of education as well. Research has led to the discussion of how to incorporate Facebook in educational settings. Utilizing Facebook as a means of discussion among students and as a resource for students to ask their teachers questions about assignments were among the suggested uses of Facebook in education (Hurt et al., 2012; Lampe et al., 2011). However, there are a few evident issues involving the lack of privacy of personal information on Facebook. Research by Rouis et al. (2011) showed that time spent absorbed on Facebook lead to negative impacts on academic achievement. The data illustrated that students become absorbed in Facebook and are unable to focus their efforts on completing assignments (Rouis et al, 2011).

In addition to using Facebook in the classroom, numerous other social networking sites can be used to supplement classroom activities. Students can utilize their creativity in new ways to work on assignments using videos and pictures. Adolescents would also have the opportunity

to collaborate inside and outside of school more effectively utilizing applications such as blogs and Google docs. Some SNS even allow students to collaborate and work with those in other countries to be exposed to new ideas or practice their language learning skills (Swan, 2013). Using SNS in the classroom and working to educate students on appropriate virtual interactions will be an important element in our adolescents' education (Swan, 2013).

Critical Analysis

There has been evidence of disparity in opinions of harm and advantages of adolescents' use of Facebook and other social networking sites. The following section will provide a critical review of the research in this area.

Evidence of the differing views and research began with the effects on adolescents of self disclosure on SNS. Research by Kite et al. (2010) showed that middle school students were exceedingly unaware of the risk of internet predators locating their school or home using the information shared by the adolescent online. Likewise Monroe (2009) found that 44-87% of teens reported they have added a stranger to their friends list—giving them access to all of their information disclosed on their profile. Christofides et al. (2009) found that Facebook users were significantly more likely to disclose personal information via SNS than in any other form of communication. However, further research found that there can be benefits of self-disclosure on SNS. Social networking sites allow an outlet for adolescents to create a social identity (Zhao et al., 2009) that is desirable for a teen seeking acceptance and popularity (Christofides et al., 2009). Valkenburg and Peter (2007) found that the availability of SNS has increased the social connectedness of adolescents with their friends and has resulted in higher quality friendships.

Research also illustrates contradictory opinions in how social networking is affecting adolescents' social skills and disposition. In addition to self-disclosure creating higher quality

friendships, Sheldon (2008) revealed that adolescents who are already extroverted tend to reap the rewards of social networking more readily than those who are introverted. Brandtzaeg (2012) reported that SNS users accounted for more reports of loneliness than those who do not participate in online social networking. Research exhibits evidence that those who utilize the Facebook status update more often than others are exceedingly likely to exhibit depressive symptoms (Moreno et al., 2011). On the contrary, individuals are then more likely to receive uplifting feedback from peers allowing Facebook to be a means of defense against depression (Moreno et al., 2011).

Finally, the controversy on educational impact of social media is vast. With the increasing use of social networking sites, students are reaping few rewards and various penalties. The availability of SNS at adolescent's fingertips, studies show that Facebook decreases student's focus on completing their assignments and has negative impacts on their academics (Rouis et al., 2011). The concerns of privacy in social networking sites and ease of distraction from academics have restrained educators from harnessing its power for good. Swan (2013) highlighted the numerous social networking applications available to supplement classroom activities. Educators would have to work with students to help them understand what virtual interactions are socially appropriate (Swan, 2013), however lend the opportunity to enhance their education in appropriate internet use.

Recommendations for Future Research

Despite the existence of studies on Facebook and other social networking sites there are still some gaps in the research. Much of the research found highlighted individuals at the college level as the population for their research. It is necessary to complete additional research of the impacts of Facebook among younger generations of adolescents. When investigating the

multiple social and emotional effects of social networking sites it was found that little research was found highlighting the positive effects Facebook and other social networking sites can have on adolescents. Similarly, there was a deficit in the amount of research associated with how this new wave of technology may benefit education. One area of exploration that could benefit educators and helpers is that of interventions that may reduce the associated risks of engaging in social media. Hopefully, from these future research opportunities will come interventions and educational supports to address the unique technological advances today's youth encounter.

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