Generation Z's Motivations to Use Social Media and Susceptibility to Anxiety

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Anxiety is the most common mental illness, and adolescence is a critical time period for developing various anxiety disorders. Social media platforms allow people to generate content to connect with others. However, increased time spent on these sites can cause unintended harmful consequences. The aim of this study was, therefore, to investigate how adolescents' motivation for using social media explains their likelihood for developing social anxiety and to further explore this association by type of social media platform – Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, and Twitter. I hypothesized that the amount of time an adolescent spends on social networking sites is associated with social anxiety due to their reliance on social media to express their feelings. A cross-sectional study was conducted, involving 1,000 students, and social media use and susceptibility to social anxiety were assessed using a self-reported survey. An analysis of variance for regression was used to investigate the association between time spent on social media and social anxiety index score. There was a significant trend between more time spent on Instagram and higher social anxiety index score ($p=0.012$), which could be because it is an interactive platform ($p=0.068$). There was a significant association between more time spent on Twitter and Snapchat, separately, and lower social anxiety index score ($p = 0.00$), which could be because they actively use it ($p=0.00$). For overall social media usage, as adolescents spent more time, their susceptibility to developing social anxiety slightly decreased ($p=0.001$). This study can be advanced by building a mathematical model that psychiatrists can use to proactively diagnose patients with social anxiety and determine the most effective treatment.

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