

Effects of Social Network and Cyberbullying on Mental Health in Young Adults in Thailand

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Abstract

Social media has become an integral part of daily life, especially for younger adults. In particular, social networking sites (SNS), such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, have profoundly altered the way in which people communicate with one another. A big problem that comes along with the help of social media is the situation of “cyberbullying” which occurs on social media. Several studies have indicated that the prolonged use of social networking sites may be related to signs and symptoms of depression. Others studies have reviewed about the impact of social media use and cyberbullying on young adults, young adults who are targeted via cyberbullying report increased depressive affects, anxiety, loneliness, suicidal behavior, and somatic symptoms. This paper reviews the current literature related to the effects of cyberbullying on adolescent health and this paper is also trying to increase more understanding to the people about cyberbullying and its effects on adolescents’ mental health and well-being and analyzed previous studies and literatures from all sources (i.e. US National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health, Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences University of Surrey, UK). The survey method was used on 88 respondents questioning about their social network behaviors and cyberbullying experiences. From the survey part, the result shows that 90% of the respondents are using social networking sites and 69.3% are aware about what is cyberbullying. On the other hand, almost 50% of 200 respondents used to encounter with cyberbullying situations. This study shows that cyberbullying is a popular problem found in young adults. The effect of cyberbullying also has a huge impact on adolescents’ mental health. The finding of this study addresses the important of the problem, cyberbullying and its preventions should be promoted.

Keywords: *cyberbullying, social network sites, mental health, social bullying, impact of cyberbullying, depression and anxiety*

1. Introduction

Social networking sites are web-based platforms on which individuals connect with other users to generate and maintain social connections. In other words, social networking is the use of internet-based social media programs to make connections with friends, family, classmates, customers and clients. Social networking can occur for a specific purpose such as social purposes, business purposes or both through sites such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Social media use is central especially to the lives of young adults, but the implications of social media use on psychological viewpoints are not well understood. From a previous study, excessive use of social network can cause a mental symptom to the users. The common symptoms found from excessive use of social network basically is depression and anxiety symptoms. In addition, the abuse of social network sites can cause cyberbullying which also mentally affect young children. The definite meaning of social bullying or cyberbullying according to Oxford dictionary is the use of electronic communication to bully a person, typically by sending messages of an intimidating or threatening nature. Cyberbullying can occur in different forms i.e. harassment: repeatedly sending insulting or threatening messages, transmission of angry or rude messages, insulting content, picture or video and cyberstalking, etc. As social networking site is a mass media of communication, cyberbullying easily occurs especially in adolescents which are the biggest group of the social networking site users. This problem is agreed by almost all the researchers. According to the research of Cowie (2013), Cyberbullying often occurs in the context of relationship difficulties, such as the break-up of a friendship or romance, envy of a peer’s success or in the context of prejudiced intolerance of particular groups on the grounds of gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation. A survey of 23,420 children and young people across Europe 13% found that, although the vast majority were never cyberbullied, 5% were being cyberbullied more than once a

week, 4% once or twice a month and 10% less often. Another study of 177 seventh-grade students in Canada showed that almost 15% of the students admitted that they cyberbullied others. Over 40% are being cyberbullied. However, the situation does not only happen in Canada but the study conducted in United States, Australia, Japan also showed the same trend. There is evidence that shows that the impact of cyberbullying is so horrible and terrible to the mental health of the victim. After facing with cyberbullying a victim can absolutely change physically and mentally from what he or she used to be. The damage from the effect of cyberbullying can be in several levels. The psychological harm occurred from cyberbullying is reflected in the victim's low self-esteem, loneliness, social isolation, failure, anger, anxiety and depression and in some extraordinary cases cyberbullying can cause a victim to commit suicide. There is a possible chance for the cyberbullying-victim to think about suicide. There is one case (2014, April 21) of Rebecca Sedwick, a 12-year-old girl from Polk County, FL, USA who jumped to her death after experiencing relentless acts of cyberbullying. Most researchers are also trying to examine and find out the association between cyberbullying and adolescent suicidal behavior. For example Hinduja & Patchin (2010) made a survey on American middle school students and examined the relationship between involvement in cyberbullying and suicidal behavior. The result was shocking, as it revealed that the cyberbullying-victims were more likely to think about suicide, as well as attempt suicide.

What is Cyberbullying :

Cyberbullying is the online harassment of children by children. When technology was introduced and computers came along a new and serious form of bullying and harassment emerged, called cyberbullying. Many forms of literature will be surveyed in this review. Generally, the definition of cyberbullying depends upon the viewpoint of those who are defining it. Pantic (2014) states that "when we define a behavior, it is important to remember it as an action that takes place in a particular context, at a particular time, with various influences operating on the individuals who take the action". This is particularly applicable to the issue of cyberbullying. The definite meaning of social bullying or cyberbullying according to the dictionary is the bullying that occurs over electronic devices, often through texting, email or through social media websites such as Facebook (this is a popular site where cyberbullying can occur). Cyber bullying has a broader audience; anyone in the world can see the hateful messages left by a bully. Cyber bullying can involve social networking sites, text messages, websites, and emails. Cyberbullies are able to harass their victims without the victims ever knowing who or why they are being cyberbullied. Cyberbullying allows the offender to mask his or her identity behind a computer.

Cyberbullying and mental health:

There is a strong association between bullying and mental health issues. Bullying can cause mental health problems and/or young people may experience bullying because of their mental health issues (Cowie, 2013). Young people who experience bullying shows higher levels of depression, anxiety, psychosomatic symptoms, suicidal thoughts and low self-esteem (Fekkes, Pipjers & Verloove-Vanhorick, 2005). Though research on cyberbullying is still emerging, studies show similar correlations between cyberbullying, low self-esteem and depression (Singleton, Abeles, & Smith, 2016). Another study, (Li, 2005) states that the psychological impact of cyberbullying on its victims is similar to traditional bullying. It includes low self-esteem, depression, anger, anxiety, academic difficulties, school avoidance, school violence, and suicide. Although, cyberbullying is linked to serious effects, like low self-esteem, family problems, academic problems, school violence and aggressive behavior, the worst consequence is suicide and violence.

Cyberbullying and suicide:

Studies show that bullying causes major emotional distress for young people who have survived a suicide attempt (Dredge, Gleeson, & de la Piedad Garcia, 2014). While bullying is often discussed alongside youth suicide, the evidence does not support the assumption that bullying specifically causes youth suicide (Kim & Leventhal, 2008). Media outlets often declare that bullying led to a youth taking their life, but there are usually more variables involved. Bullying is not thought to be part of normal development

and exposure to bullying is known to be harmful and can increase the risk of suicidal ideation and behaviors in youth (Kim & Leventhal, 2008), even though it does not cause suicide on its own.

However, it is essential to address bullying and cyberbullying at individual, peer group, school and community levels. Community efforts should aim to foster positive relationships among young people and create a community environment that is responsive to bullying incidents and intolerant of bullying behavior.

2. Objectives

1. To review the problems of cyberbullying
2. To highlight the problems of cyberbullying and the abuse of social networking sites in Thai society
3. To make a clear understanding about the impact and the effect of cyberbullying on the young people

3. Research Methods

3.1 Information source

This review include studies on cyberbullying association with the impact on mental health of young adolescents. The data and information are collected from several literatures, studies and previous research. All the documents related to the topic is searched using the following data based: EBSCO Host (online data base for academic libraries), NCBI (The National Center for Biotechnology Information advances science and health) and PMC (PubMed Central U.S. National Institutes of Health's National Library of Medicine (NIH/NLM)).

3.2 Survey Method

Online questionnaires are prepared on the topic 'Social Networking and Mental Health'. This online survey is used to query 200 people whose age is between 15-25 years. The survey is made by Google Forms.

4. Results and Discussion

After making the survey, the results are as following:

Data in Figure 1 shows the number of the participants in which 52 persons (55.9%) are men and 42 persons (42.5%) are women.

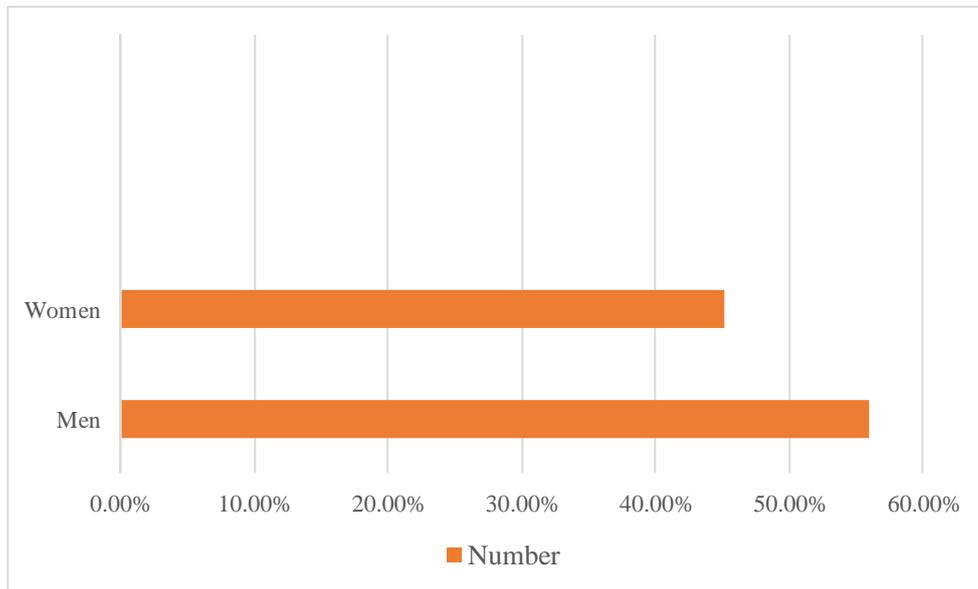


Figure 1 The participants are those teenagers whose age is between 18-21 years

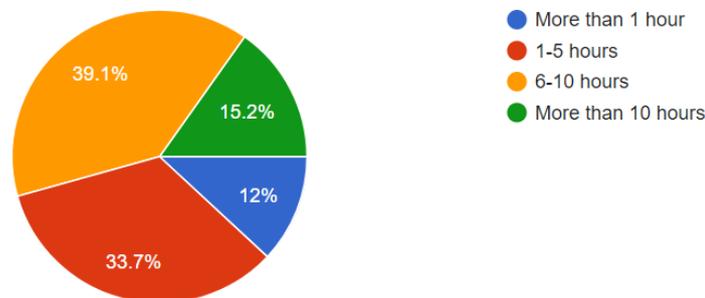


Figure 2 Participant's time spent on the internet

The participants were asking about their social behavior. The data from Figure 2 shows the time that the participants spend on using social network in a day and most of them were using social network for 6-10 hours per day. The time spends on social network can indicate how a person gets connected in social network life and it can effect their behaviour too. The reason to use social media is because social network is one of the best ways in keeping in touch with their friends and acquaintances, the second most important reason is that most of the news is updated very quickly on networking sites so they want to be alert and get information by using social networking sites. Others reasons for using social networking sites are to share experience, photos or videos to make new friends and even some cases social networking is related to their career and subjects.

The result from the questionnaire comes to the part of the relationship between social networking and a user's mental health. People were asking about Do you have an idea what is social bullying or cyberbullying, The result is quite good that most of participants exactly realize what is social bullying as the iformation are shown in Figure 3 below:

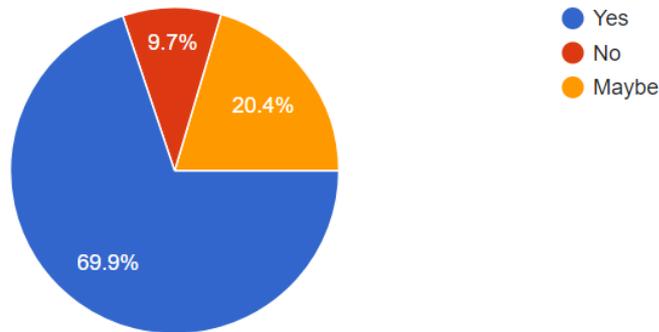


Figure 3 Participant's knowledge about social bullying

Figure 4 shows the information about Has a person ever faced with social bullying situation or not. The result shows that almost 40% of all the participants were faced with social bullying situations or cyberbullying.

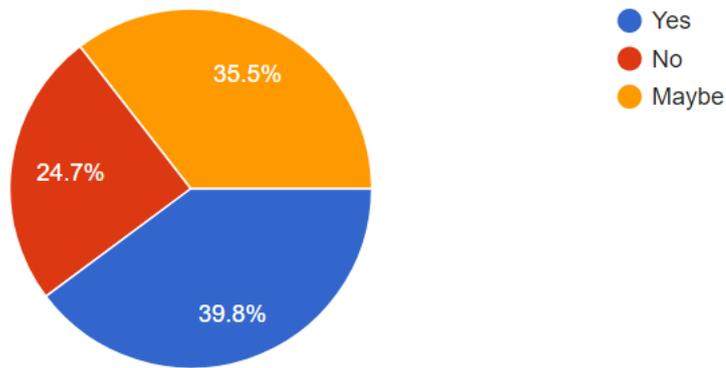


Figure 4 Participant's experience on social bullying

Figure 5 indicates the number of the participants whose friends and acquaintances ever faced with social bullying situations and cyberbullying. The number of those whose friends ever faced with social bullying is almost 60% whereas some of them were not sure either their friends ever faced with the situation of social bullying or not.

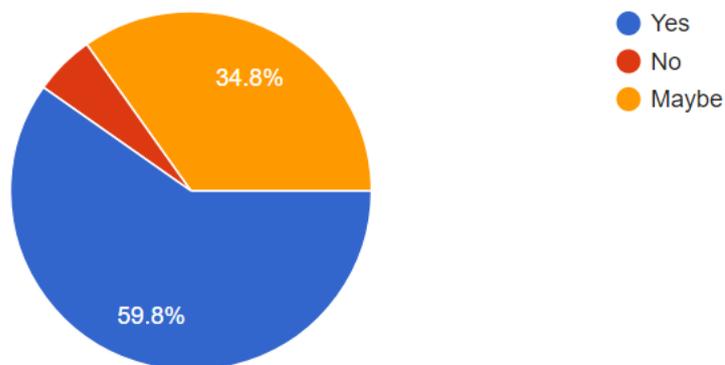


Figure 5 Acquaintances of participant's experiences on social bullying

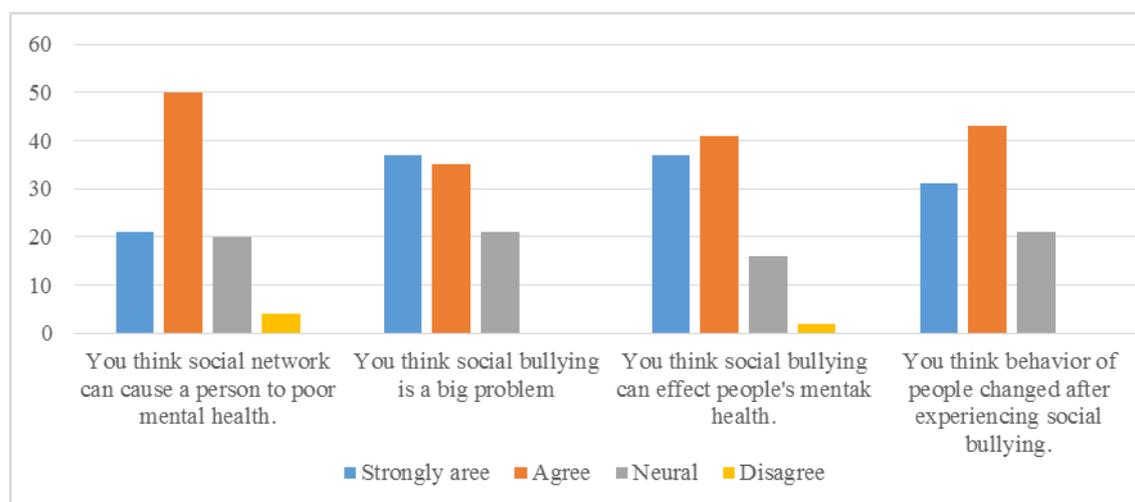


Figure 6 Attitude about relationship between mental health and social bullying

Figure 6 shows the attitude of the participants toward the relationship between mental health and social bullying.

5. Conclusion

From the previous research and the result from the survey, it is found that social bullying can effect people's mental health. The damage of the impact depends on the situation and perception of the victims too. These days, social bullying can easily be found in society. Some people are becoming social bullied unintentionally, however more research and investigation should be conducted on how to solve the problem and how the treatment can be made for the victim.

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