

Chapter 1

The Dark Side of Engaging With Social Networking Sites (SNS)

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ABSTRACT

Although social networking sites (SNS) may have some positive aspects, for example, connecting family members and friends who no longer live close enough to each other to meet in person, or for connecting people with similar health conditions who may need the support of others who understand and can manage the condition, or for groups of people with similar interests to engage and plan events and activities, there are also some possible negative aspects of engaging with SNS, for example, addiction or addictive behaviour, child pornography, cyberbullying, fake news, fear of missing out (FOMO), social comparisons, stalking, amongst many others, which can all lead to neglect of other duties, sleep deprivation, loneliness, isolation, depression, and so forth. The possible negative effects of engaging with SNS on the surface web will perhaps be also relevant to users of the deep and dark web. This article explores the dark side of social networking sites.

INTRODUCTION

Although engagement with the deep or dark web may seem to some to be intimidating or possibly threatening, the surface web similarly presents users with challenges which may also be detrimental to one's peace of mind or health. This paper reviews the dark side of engaging with the surface web through the use of Social Networking Sites (SNS), the issues discussed in this paper will also be relevant to users' engagement with the deep and dark web. While SNS have the potential to impact positively on adolescent's health and well-being, the use of SNS has the potential for exposure to possible risks (Guinta & John, 2018). SNS include: Facebook (2018), QZone (2018), YouTube (2018), Twitter (2018), Reddit (2018), Pinterest (2018), Tumblr (2018), Flickr (2018), Whatsapp (2018), Snapchat (2018), Viber

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(2018), Google+ (2018), Instagram (2018), LinkedIn (2018), Skype (2018), Tinder (2018), Grindr (2018), amongst many others used around the world. Computer algorithms are used to draw people in to frequent use of SNS. Once someone is online and engaging with SNS, more computer algorithms are used to keep the persons attention and hence increase the amount of time spent online. Recommender systems are used to enhance collaborative filtering algorithms which encourage users engagement with Social Networking Sites (Eirinaki, Gao, Varlamis, & Tserpes, 2018; Liu & Lee, 2010). The dark side of engaging with SNS includes: addiction or addictive behavior, child pornography, cyberbullying, fake news, Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO), social comparisons, stalking, amongst many others, which can all lead to neglect of other duties, sleep deprivation, loneliness, isolation, depression, and so forth. The aim of this chapter is to review the negative effects of engaging with SNS and consider what solutions can be proposed to alleviate the damage caused by engagement with SNS.

BACKGROUND

“It is increasingly observable that social media present enormous risks for individuals, communities, firms, and even for society as a whole” (Baccarella, Wagner, Kietzmann, & McCarthy, 2018, p. 431). Now that we as a society are aware of the possible dangers posed by social media, it is time to address all of these potential risks with individuals, communities, organisations, and so forth. By identifying and highlighting these risks and through ensuring that individuals, communities, and organisations are made aware of these risks, only then will it be possible to successfully deal with such risks. “Even with social media executives admitting that their platforms have deleterious impacts, users tend not to question the short- and long-term implications and potential risks of their choices” (Baccarella et al., 2018, p. 432). Users should be encouraged to question the short and long term risks of engaging with SNS. This is a discussion in which all members of society should engage, not just parents and school teachers. Many adults are experiencing problems as a result of excessive engagement with SNS. This paper reviews some of the negative effects of engaging with SNS on the habits (addiction and addictive behaviour, exposure to child pornography, cyberbullying) and mental health (fake news, fear of missing out, social comparisons, stalking) of users. In addition, users are encouraged to consider how their use of SNS may be impacting the lives of others (family members, work colleagues, and other online users).

The Dark Web

The dark web represents a number of anonymously created websites which are hosted on the deep web. The dark web is intentionally hidden (Paul, 2018), the content is not indexed for search engines to find, unlike the surface web where the content is indexed and accessible to standard web browsers, for example, Google Chrome (Google, 2019), Mozilla Firefox (Firefox, 2019), or Microsoft Internet Explorer (Microsoft, 2019). The surface web is the opposite of the deep web (also known as the invisible web and the hidden web). The surface web is easily accessible to all using standard web browsers on the internet. The deep web and the dark web are not accessible through standard web search engines and web crawlers.

In a research study conducted by Dalins, Wilson & Carman (2018) the findings suggest that “criminality on this ‘dark web’ is based more upon greed and desire, rather than any particular political motivations” (Dalins et al., 2018, p. 62). The dark web refers to a number of anonymously hosted websites on the deep web which are accessible by using specialized software to hide the Internet Protocol (IP)

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