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LGBT+ Teens, Social Media Use & Depressive Symptoms

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BACKGROUND

• Social networking sites (SNS) such as Facebook, Twitter and Tumblr play a particularly important role in the queer adolescent self-construction process 1,2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
• LGBT+ (an acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and other non-heterosexual, non-cisgender sexual and gender identities) youth access social media more frequently than their cisgender, heterosexual counterparts:
  - to learn about their identities 5, 8, 9, 10, 11
  - to create supplemental support networks online, 1, 4, 4, 9
  - to explore new forms of self-expression 1, 2, 4, 9
• This increased use of SNSs exposes them to additional forms of discrimination, such as cyberbullying
• This can contribute to feelings of anxiety, depression or lowered self-esteem 2, 7, 8, 12, 13

RESEARCH QUESTION

• What is the relationship between Social Networking Site use and the prevalence of depressive symptoms in the LGBT+ youth population?

METHODS

• The researchers utilized a snowball sampling method
• The measurement tool was an anonymous, 27-question online SNAP survey consisting of two existing quantitative measures:
  - the Social Network Sites (SNSs) Usage Questionnaire
  - the Pediatric Depressive Symptoms Survey
• Surveys were distributed via the researchers' personal social media accounts & emails to local support agencies
• The researchers received a total of 56 completed questionnaires
• Based on an initial assessment of the data & exclusion criteria, n = 34
• The researchers utilized SPSS 24 to conduct Pearson’s Correlation Analyses

RESULTS

• The majority of respondents identified as 16 year old white, bisexual females
• There were a total of six moderate, significant correlations between the following variables:
  - “How frequently do you use SNSs?” & “In the past seven days, it was hard for me to have fun” (r = .361, p = .039)
  - “How frequently do you update your profile image?” & “In the past seven days, I felt alone” (r = .535, p = .001)
  - “How frequently do you visit your friends’ homepage?” & “In the past seven days, I felt unhappy” (r = .452, p = .009)
  - “How frequently do you update your profile image?” & “In the past seven days, I felt unhappy” (r = .386, p = .029)
  - “How frequently do you update your status?” & “In the past seven days, I felt unhappy” (r = .371, p = .033)
  - “How frequently do you update your profile image?” & “In the past seven days, I felt alone” (r = .368, p = .035)

DISCUSSION

• The research study findings, although tentative due to small sample size, support current literature stating that there is a significant link between social networking site use and the prevalence of depressive symptoms in LGBT+ youth.
• Replication with a larger sample is needed to confirm these findings
• The researchers recommend the use of a mixed-method approach to gain access to qualitative data on the subject

REFERENCES