



Review article

The associations between problematic Facebook use, psychological distress and well-being among adolescents and young adults: A systematic review and meta-analysis



Claudia Marino^{a,b,*}, Gianluca Gini^a, Alessio Vieno^a, Marcantonio M. Spada^b

^a Dipartimento di Psicologia dello Sviluppo e della Socializzazione, Università degli Studi di Padova, Padova, Italy

^b Division of Psychology, School of Applied Sciences, London South Bank University, London, UK

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Anxiety
Depression
Mental health
Meta-analysis
Problematic Facebook use
Well-being

ABSTRACT

Background: A growing body of research has analyzed the potential risks of problematic Facebook use for mental health and well-being. The current meta-analysis is the first to examine the associations between problematic Facebook use, psychological distress (i.e., depression, anxiety, etc.) and well-being (life satisfaction, positive mental health) among adolescents and young adults. Method: A comprehensive search strategy identified relevant studies in PsychInfo, Pubmed, Scopus, ResearchGate, and Google Scholar.

Results: The final sample included 23 independent samples with a total of 13,929 participants (60.7% females; $M_{age} = 21.93$, range: 16.5–32.4). Results of random effects meta-analysis confirmed a positive correlation between problematic Facebook use and psychological distress ($r = .34$, 95% CI [.28, .39]). Moderation analysis revealed that effect sizes were larger in older samples. Moreover, a negative correlation between problematic Facebook use and well-being was observed ($r = -.22$, 95% CI [–.28, –.15]).

Limitations: All available studies used a cross-sectional design thus hampering the possibility to establish the direction of the association between problematic Facebook use and psychological distress and well-being.

Conclusions: Results are discussed within the extant literature on problematic Facebook use and future research directions are proposed. This research may also inform clinical and prevention interventions on problematic Facebook use.

1. Introduction

With about 2 billion of users worldwide, Facebook is the most used social networking site (Facebook statistics, 2017). The increasing amount of time people spend using it, the variety of activities people can do on Facebook, and the consequent psychological importance it assumes in people's life have led researchers to analyze the effect it may have on users' mental health and well-being (Ryan et al., 2016). Even though social networking sites addiction has not yet been recognized as a legitimate disorder, recent research has indicated that use of social networking sites like Facebook could become *problematic* and be characterized by addictive-type symptoms (Griffiths et al., 2014). In view of this, problematic Facebook use has been recently defined as the use of Facebook which creates impairments and problems in users' life, such as psychological, emotional, social, school, or work difficulties (e.g., Marino et al., 2016a).

In the literature, different terms coexist (e.g., “problematic Facebook use”, “Facebook addiction”, “Facebook intrusion”) referring

to a fundamentally similar concept of Facebook use as a potential behavioral addiction (Blachnio et al., 2015). These terms are often used interchangeably, even though they may emphasize specific aspects of problematic Facebook use. For example, “Facebook addiction” is defined either by the six criteria of addiction (i.e., salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict, and relapse) or by similar factors based on the definition of gambling addiction (e.g. withdrawal, interpersonal problems due to Facebook use, time management and performance problems) (Andreassen et al., 2012; Griffiths, 2000). The term “Facebook intrusion” stresses more strongly the aspect of relations with others and the term “problematic Facebook use” centers on the preference for online social interaction (Marino et al., 2017; Caplan, 2010) as a means of mood regulation.

Due to the lack of a shared definition, for the purpose of the current meta-analysis, problematic Facebook use has been defined as a problematic behavior characterized by either addictive-like symptoms and/or scarce self-regulation related to Facebook use reflecting in social and personal problems.

* Corresponding author at: Dipartimento di Psicologia dello Sviluppo e della Socializzazione, Università di Padova, Padova, Italy.
E-mail address: claudia.marino@phd.unipd.it (C. Marino).

Overall, the prevalence of problematic Facebook use appears to range between 2% and 10% among adolescents and young adults¹ worldwide (Alabi, 2013; Chabrol et al., 2017; Marcial, 2013; Moreau et al., 2015) showing the need to understand this global phenomenon in more depth (Błachnio et al., 2015). Moreover, in recent years researchers have been showing an increasing interest in the association between problematic Facebook use and psychological distress and well-being (Satici and Uysal, 2015). Whereas some authors considered problematic Facebook use as a potential risk factor for psychological distress and low levels of well-being (Andreassen and Pallesen, 2014; Balcı and Gölcü, 2013), other researchers have suggested that problematic Facebook use is rather a consequence of other aspects of psychological ill being, such as depression, loneliness, or poor psycho-social health (Balcı and Gölcü, 2013; Satici et al., 2014). Irrespective of the directionality of the relationship between problematic Facebook use and psychological distress and well-being, in the current study we wanted to establish whether such relationship exists and how strong it may be. In order to accomplish this objective we conducted a meta-analysis focused on studies on problematic Facebook use and its association with psychological distress and well-being. According to the World Health Organization's definition of health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (Callahan, 1973, p. 78), we included studies that focused on of both “negative” correlates (psychological distress) and “positive” correlates (well-being).

1.1. Problematic facebook use and psychological distress

Much research on problematic Facebook use has focused on the idea that problematic users are more likely to present symptoms of psychological distress than non-problematic users (Denti et al., 2012; Koc and Gulyagci, 2013; Uysal et al., 2013). Specifically, several studies (e.g., Chabrol et al., 2017; Moreau et al., 2015) found positive associations between mental health problems, such as anxiety/social anxiety and depressive symptoms, and problematic Facebook use. To explain this relation, authors argued that depressed users tend to problematically use Facebook to regulate their mood online (Hong et al., 2014) and that especially socially anxious users tend to compensate their low self-esteem and poor face-to-face communication skills through maladaptive Facebook use (Bodroža and Jovanović, 2016), thus decreasing their perceived sense of loneliness (Olufadi, 2016). It has been also shown that social media use may provide benefits for socially anxious and shy individuals in terms of perceived social support (Indian and Grieve, 2014). In these cases, what makes Facebook use “problematic” is the fact that users experiencing unwanted feelings or a sense of loneliness usually expect to feel better, albeit in the short-term, when on Facebook, and that they usually do not translate such benefits in increased social skills to be spent in offline relationships with non-Facebook friends (Baker and Oswald, 2010). Moreover, depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation have been found among problematic Facebook users who consider Facebook an easy escape from their real life problems (Walburg et al., 2016). In line with these findings, Satici and colleagues (2013) showed that people with high levels of psychological vulnerability are more likely to fulfill their everyday social needs, such as acceptance and sense of belonging, by problematically using Facebook (Satici et al., 2014). Overall, problematic Facebook use was found to be associated with a variety of negative outcomes for users' life. Therefore, the first aim of the current study was to quantitatively summarize the magnitude of the association between

¹ Research on problematic Facebook use has never really adopted a developmental approach, which represents an apparent limitation of the current literature. Consequently, studies reviewed here did not explicitly address issues related to potential age-related differences of this phenomenon and of possible differential associations of problematic Facebook use with users' well-being at different stages of life (i.e., adolescence vs. adulthood).

problematic Facebook use and psychological distress so far found in the field.

1.2. Problematic facebook use and general well-being

Previous studies have indicated a positive effect of adaptive Facebook use on subjective well-being, for example in terms of increased social capital (Valenzuela et al., 2009) and civic engagement (Lenzi et al., 2015), but recent research has drawn attention also to the potential detrimental effects of problematic Facebook use on different indicators of well-being, such as social and emotional adjustment, and quality of life (Bevan et al., 2014; Kalpidou et al., 2011; Satici and Uysal, 2015).

Negative associations have been found between life satisfaction (Błachnio et al., 2016), subjective vitality, and subjective happiness (Satici and Uysal, 2015) and problematic Facebook use. For example, Kross et al. (2013) found that the more participants used Facebook, the more their life satisfaction levels declined. In line with these findings, it has also been argued that problematic behaviours on Facebook co-occur with low levels of satisfaction with social relationships (Elphinston and Noller, 2011) and self-worth (Rae and Lonborg, 2015). Overall, literature indicates that problematic use of SNSs like Facebook may be associated with a lower general well-being (Kuss and Griffiths, 2011). Therefore, the second aim of the current meta-analysis was to investigate the relation between problematic Facebook use and well-being as suggested by studies in the field so far.

1.3. The present study

Given the rising attention devoted to the topic of problematic Facebook use in the psychological literature, especially in view of its relations with individual (mal)adjustment and well-being, it is important to systematically examine the magnitude of effects that have been found thus far in this field to draw informed conclusions as to whether problematic Facebook use is worthy of continued investigation. To this respect, the use of meta-analysis has distinct advantages over primary studies in providing greater statistical power because it aggregates data across samples from all studies. For these reasons, a meta-analytic review of the existing correlational research on the relations of problematic Facebook use with individuals' psychological adjustment is warranted. In this article, therefore, we meta-analytically summarized the relations between problematic Facebook use and (i) psychological distress, and (ii) general well-being, with the main aim of estimating the strength of such associations in the normal population. In doing so, we looked at the actual measurement items and construct definitions to determine a construct's name, rather than blindly relying on an article's choice of terms. For example, “problematic Facebook use,” “Facebook abuse,” and “Facebook addiction” were treated as the same; similarly, various types of problems, such as “psychological vulnerability,” “poor mental health” and “psychological symptoms” were all categorized as “psychological distress”. Specifically, we hypothesized a positive association between problematic Facebook use and psychological distress (e.g., depression, anxiety, etc.) and a negative association between problematic Facebook use and well-being (e.g., happiness, satisfaction with life, etc.).

As a secondary goal, we explored the potential moderators of effect sizes to explain between-study variability of these effects. Sample characteristics, including mean age of participants, proportion of females, and geographic location of the sample were considered as potential moderators. First, similar to what has been found for other negative experiences online (Fisher et al., 2016; Kowalski et al., 2014), the associations between problematic Facebook use and both psychological distress and well-being (with opposite signs) were hypothesized to be larger in older samples. Compared to adolescents, indeed, young adults appear more likely to have longer experiences with this type of social network misuse and, therefore, may report more psychological

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5721664>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5721664>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)