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Mindfulness in learning safe sex via social media: Perspectives of personality and experiential value

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ABSTRACT

Sexual topics are attractive to young adults and this may invoke substantial attention that diverts their thinking regarding sexual intervention to engage learning contents. The aim of this study was to explore students' mindfulness when learning how to use condoms from watching videos on a social media (i.e., YouTube), and to self-assess their mindfulness, which reflected to their continuance intention to learn about safe sex via social media, mediated by their perception of hedonic and utilitarian values. Data from 132 senior high students were collected and subjected to confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling. The results indicated that the neuroticism personality trait was positively correlated to mindfulness, but openness was negatively correlated to mindfulness. Mindfulness was positively correlated to both hedonic and utilitarian experiential values, and both experiential values were positively correlated to continuance intention to learn about safe sex via social media. The implications of this study suggest that social media may be a useful channel for senior high school students to learn sexual health concepts.

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1. Introduction

According to a survey by the Health Promotion Administration, Ministry of Health and Welfare of Taiwan (2013), 10%–13.5% of adolescents aged 15–17 years have had sexual intercourse, and 8.3% of these adolescents had sexual intercourse for the first time at age 15 or younger. In addition, 15% of high school students have had sexual intercourse, and this percentage has increased over time. A report by the Centers for Disease Control, Taiwan Ministry of Health (2014) indicated that 66.8% of males aged 15–49 years did not know that condoms should be used with a water-based lubricant. Advocates for Youth, a Taiwan-based study that focuses on adolescent sexual health, reported that few adolescents knew how to use condoms correctly, and engaging in risky sexual behaviors can result in unplanned health outcomes, such as pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases. Therefore, safe sex education programs should guide youths to engage in safe sex. For most adolescents, using the Internet and social media is an integral part of

daily life. The advent of the Internet has enhanced information dispersal and communication worldwide and thus increased adolescents' access to information on sex (Cookingham & Ryan, 2015).

There are significant biological, individual, cognitive, contextual, and social changes that occur during adolescence (e.g., Bauermeister, Zimmerman, Caldwell, Xue, & Gee, 2010; Moilanen, Crockett, Raffaelli, & Jones, 2010), which likely influence the relationship between impulsivity and risky sexual behavior (Donohew et al., 2000). Previous studies have shown that many adolescents initiate sex and experience sexual curiosity because of their exposure to social media (Albarracín, Kumkale, & Johnson, 2004; Bobkowski, Shafer, & Ortiz, 2016). Adolescents who have viewed sexual photos and posted sexual photos on social media are more likely to be curious (Temple et al., 2012) or impulsive about sex and experimented with sex (Dir, Coskunpinar, & Cyders, 2014). As such, use of social media may have a significant impact on the social and sexual well-being of adolescents (Cookingham & Ryan, 2015). In accordance with this, sex education can be integrated into social media to provide accurate and complete information supported by the educational administration (Byron, Albury, & Evers, 2013). Through using social media, students can control the progress of their learning by repeating playback, rewinding or fast forwarding the sex education video. The context of integrating sex education

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into social media has not been extensively examined; accordingly, the aim of this research was to gain an understanding of adolescents using social media for safe sex education.

Sexual health promotion agencies in the social media space should not expect students to fully engage and be mindful when learning the health promotion content. Kabat-Zinn defined mindfulness as “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally” (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p.4). In this sense, viewing a video related to sex may arouse adolescents’ sexual curiosity (Dir et al., 2014), which may lead to loss of focus in moment-to-moment engagement during social media learning; ultimately resulting in not acquiring safe sex knowledge from social media learning. In this regard, few studies have focused on the effect of adolescents’ mindfulness during safe sex education via social media. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the role mindfulness plays while adolescents learn about safe sex via social media.

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) proposed theory of reason action (TRA) to explain the beliefs of behavioral attitudes and behaviors when using media for learning. That is, a belief forms when an attribute is linked to an object based on direct observation, inference, or information from another source that assigns meaning to that object. Hall-Phillips, Park, Chung, Anaza, and Rathod (2016) suggested that aspects of users’ social media experience and experiential values were found to enhance users’ engagement. In addition, Baams et al. (2015) found personality affects adolescents’ sexual behavior. Moreover, neuroticism was found to be significant in the prediction of the overall frequency of negative sexual cognitions; whereas openness was found to be significantly related to all types of positive sexual cognitions (Moyano & Sierra, 2013). Taken together, the present study assumed that mindfulness asserts an effect independent of experiential values and intention to learn about safe sex via social media. Therefore, we will examine the influence of personality on the role of mindfulness, and its effect on two valence aspects (hedonism and utilitarian), and the effect on continuance intention to about learn about safe sex from social media.

2. Literature review

To assess the effectiveness of media in facilitating students’ social media learning, Moreno (2006) proposed the Cognitive-Affective Theory of Learning with Media (CATLM) to focus on the cognitive and affective processes in multimedia learning. These processes include the concept of attitude mediation, which indicates affective factors may influence the cognitive activation of the learners (Leutner, 2014). Drawing from CATLM, individuals’ personalities may interplay with mindfulness to affect their perception of experiential values and reflect to willingness to use social media in learning.

2.1. Personality in the context of social media learning

There are many theories to categorize personality, and the widespread acceptance of the Five Factor or “Big Five” model of personality (Chamorro-Premuzic, Furnham, & Lewis, 2007), which postulates that five major dimensions (i.e., neuroticism or emotional stability, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness) account for consistent behavioral, emotional, and cognitive patterns (Duff, Boyle, Dunleavy, & Ferguson, 2004; Furnham et al., 2007). In particular, openness and neuroticism represent a bipolar individual difference variable that ranges from pessimistic to optimistic at the opposite extreme (Patrick Sharpe, Martin, & Roth, 2011).

Neuroticism is often hypothesized to have a protective function,

and worry and anxiety motivate behaviors to seize limited social opportunities and avoid distress (Denissen, 2008; Michalski & Shackelford, 2010; Nettle, 2006). In contrast, high openness is characterized by a desire for newness, a preference for variety, adventurousness, exploration, and new experiences (Goldberg et al., 2006). Corresponding with these dispositions, it is expected that when learning about safe sex from social media, the neuroticism personality trait would be associated with less desire for new experiences compared to the openness personality trait. Thus, this study explored the correlations between these two types of personalities and adolescents’ mindfulness when learning about condom use via social media.

2.2. Mindfulness in the context of learning about safe sex with social media

Trait activation theory (Tett & Burnett, 2003), which was originally applied to the work environment, can be invoked to suggest that effectiveness levels will be favorable if there is a strong suitability between the learner’s personality and the cognitive efforts required to learn effectively in a particular environment. Engagement involves physical, cognitive, emotional energy, and connection with work activities (Kahn, 1990). The commonality in these definitions is the active and volitional cognitive engagement of the mind during the moment of mindfulness (Kee & Liu, 2011). Mindfulness can be conceptualized as the process of receptive attention to and awareness of internal and external experiences as they occur (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Brown, Ryan, & Creswell, 2007; Garland, Gaylord, & Fredrickson, 2011). Mindfulness may also be conceptualized as a psychological trait that refers to the tendency to be mindful in learning activities in a moment-to-moment manner (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Holas & Jankowski, 2013; Shapiro, Carlson, Astin, & Freedman, 2006).

Mindfulness, which reflects a state of being associated with attentive presence to what is happening in the here and now, is correlated to characteristics related to depression and experiential avoidance (Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer, & Toney, 2006; Hamill, Pickett, Amsbaugh, & Aho, 2015). Thus, learning activities may invoke an individual’s perception, sensation, and imagination, which can result in loss of focus on the learning object by imaging or thinking of other objects without a self-regulative feedback loop (Fernandez-Duque, Baird, & Posner, 2000; Jankowski & Holas, 2014). Consistent with this concept, when students learn about safe sex via social media, their perceptions regarding the learning objectives may affect their mindfulness and learning effect. Thus, this research examined the effects of adolescents’ mindfulness dispositions (i.e., their tendency to pay attention moment to moment) while learning about safe sex via social media.

2.3. Experiential values

Rokeach (1973) described values as “shared prescriptive or proscriptive beliefs” regarding ideal modes of behavior and end-states of existence. When individuals talk about their personal values or the values that other individuals hold, they typically have in mind a value regarding their individual personal standards or belief about what is desirable (Higgins, 2006). Hirschman and Holbrook’s (1982) theory of experiential processing conceptualizes that the user chooses products or services based on expectations related to subjective experiences. These subjective experiences generate hedonic value, which involves feelings of fantasy and/or fun that are experienced while consuming the product or service. A utilitarian value is defined as the “perceived utility acquired from an alternative’s capacity for functional, utilitarian or physical performance” (Sheth, Newman, & Gross, 1991, p.

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