One's Social Media Identity: Article Review

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Abstract

In the last ten years, the impact of social media has expanded dramatically. Before phone technology, face-to-face interactions were the main factor in how one's sense of identity forms. Today, social media allows the sharing of misinformation about oneself or others. In some cases, misinformation can impose impossible standards for perfection that cause identity struggles. Misinformation not only dictates what is the ideal image but can create a negative self-view for men and women who do not fall into that minuscule category. It also allows for exploitation that threatens victims' sense of identity and mental health. The following articles reviewed herein show the consequences of interacting on unregulated social media networks, which leads to cyberbullying (electronic communication of bullying of threatening messages or implications), and social media's role in furthering the idea of a perfect exterior.

Keywords

identity, social media, perfection, body image, cyberbullying, fake news

Article Review

Aoun Barakat, K., Dabbous, A., & Tarhini, A. (2021). An empirical approach to understanding users' fake news identification on social media. *Online Information Review, 45*(6), 1080–1096. https://doi.org/10.1108/OIR-08-2020-0333

Alharbi, A., Dong, H., Yi, X., Tari, Z., & Khalil, I. (2021). Social media identity deception detection: A survey. *ACM Computing Surveys (Csur), 54*(3), 1–35. https://doi.org/10.1145/3446372

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Erentaité, R. & Bergman, L. R. & Žukauskiené, R. (2012). Cross-contextual stability of bullying victimization: A person-oriented analysis of cyber and traditional bullying experiences among adolescents. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology, 53*(2), 181–190. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9450.2011.00935.x

Social media has become a part of day-to-day life for most people in some way. Although social media has given us the opportunity to communicate at any moment how we feel, it also makes it easy to create a persona that does not relay who we actually are. Our online identities also prompt us to interact in a space with a higher risk of cyberbullying and exploitation.

Social Media Effects

Mass communication has allowed people to pass information to a large audience in moments; however, it has raised worries about the credibility of the information in the circumstances and increased the existence of misinformation, i.e., "fake news." In "An Empirical Approach to Understanding Users' Fake News," Aoun Barakat, Dabbous, and Tarhini (2021) address the lack of studies exploring users' fake news identification behavior. Social media is not only aimed toward teens but also toward all ages under 40 who are still creating and finding their identity in life. As a result, the goal of this study was to understand better the elements that influence people's ability to identify inaccurate information on social media. This study takes a quantitative approach and provides a behavioral model to investigate the factors impacting social media users' identification of fake news, "the lack of accountability and veracity checking techniques within social media platforms make them

a perfect place for the spread of spam, misinformation and rumors" (Khan et al., 2019). The trust that social media users afford to fake news not only demonstrates the risks of relying on social media for information. This confidence in social media as a gauge of reality also puts one in danger of accepting virtual profiles as real, or even as a standard for themselves.

In their article "Social Media Identity Deception Detection: A Survey," Alharbi, Dong, Yi, Tari, and Khalil (2021) examine a study on people ages 15-40 by investigating social media identity deception and how to analyze social media critically. It expands on the definition of identity deception as "attacks, which can be categorized into fake profile, identity theft and identity cloning" (Alhararbi et al., 2021, p. 1). This journal article examines many topics, such as fake profiles (malicious accounts), sybil attacks (attacker creates a large number of pseudonymous profiles (identities), and sock-puppets (one single fake online identity). User profiles are used to engage and share information. In the previous two decades, social media has proliferated and has become a vital part of many people's lives. Users on various social media platforms numbered about 3.8 billion at the start of 2020, with a total increase of 321 million worldwide in the previous year. Users spend approximately 15% of their waking hours on social media. As the previous researchers mentioned in their article, misinformation is not studied enough. As a result, when someone creates a fake profile, they create an identity that is not theirs. After pretending to be someone, the person begins to believe that they are that person- this is considered an act of "catfishing" oneself. A person changes their entire identity to become the fabricated online "perfection" that is not nearly what they look or feel like inside.

There is a lack of research studying male social media users and their body perceptions. Therefore, Chatzopoulou, Filieri, and Dogruvol (2020) not only bring awareness that men have a "hot-bod" mindset like women, but also concludes that it is crucial to investigate how exposure to this new channel affects body image perceptions and behavior, particularly the consequences on

consumers' psycho-logical and physical wellbeing. The lack of research on this gender may be due to the widely held belief that body image disorders affect females primarily and that men are at little or no risk of experiencing body image issues (McCabe and Ricciardelli, 2003; Daniel and Bridges, 2010). Because males consider body image a feminine issue, they are hesitant to show emotions behind insecurity about their bodies because they do not want to appear weak or vulnerable. As a result of this stereotype, male social media users may be unaware of social media's effect on them (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2006). More evidence concerning the effects of social media on males are the facts that eating disorders have the greatest mortality rate of any mental health issue among men with 400,000 males suffering in the United Kingdom alone (Chatzopoulou, 2017) and that eating disorders will impact 10 million boys in the United States at some time in their life (Wade, Keski-Rahkonen, and Hudson, 2011). Shedding light on this topic is very important because everyone's identity is important and social media has proven to shift one's identity, whether one is female or male.

Social Media's Power Dynamics

Cyberbullying is rising as people design messages of hatred or malice directed at a single person, and this is the topic of Holladay's (2011) study. Unlike conventional bullying, cyberbullying has a large audience; for example, if a malicious note is passed in class, only the bully and the victim have seen it. Conversely, when a comment is posted online, millions of people can see it. A study shows that over "2,000 middle school children indicated that cyberbullying victims were nearly twice as likely to attempt suicide as students who were not targeted with online abuse" (Holladay, 2011). Social media has given people the opportunity to express themselves and the platform to say whatever they like without limitation, which in turn is when the line of decency can be crossed.

Additionally, cyber sexual violence (Cyber-SV) is a purposeful act to control, shame, and humiliate emerging young women (EYW). It covers all forms of online gender and sexual exploitation that can potentially jeopardize EYW's privacy and safety offline. Pashang, Khanlou, and Clarke (2019) conducted a qualitative study used an anti-oppression and gender-transformative health promotion framework to investigate the mental health effects of Cyber-SV on EYW identity reported in this paper. Being targeted by this behavior causes severe mental health impacts for young girls and women, including a loss of confidence that can damage their sense of identity. The findings indicate that the mental health impact of Cyber-SV (cyber sexual violence) intersects with identity in the form of Cyber-R (cyber revenge) as a way of regaining loss of control over the victim's life situation. Ironically, the victim uses the same method to which they were subjugated. This is proven by a study that "utilized an exploratory, qualitative method in which data is driven from in-depth interviews, art-making sessions, textual analysis, and policy analysis" (Maxwell, 2016). According to their findings, schools and academic institutions are the key areas and locations where Cyber-SV against EYW occurs. However, according to research participants, these organizations lack the information and experience needed to prevent exploitation.

In their study, researchers Erentaité, Bergman, and Žukauskiené (2012) compared traditional bullying to cyberbullying. Recent years have marked the emergence of new kinds of bullying through information and communication technology (computers, mobile phones, etc.), extending victimization experiences from school and peer-group contexts to new and unexplored cyberspace situations. The individuals targeted most often are students in middle school and high school. The remaining question evaluated in this research article was "whether bullying victimization at school continues into subsequent cyberbullying victimization. Cyberbullying is considered especially harmful due to its anonymous and omni-present character" (Li, 2007, 2008; Patchin & Hinduja, 2006;

Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). Aside from estimating the overlap of traditional and cyberbullying victimization, this paper's research attempted to pinpoint the nature of the link between distinct types of bullying victimization at school and in cyberspace. There are at least three theoretical possibilities proposed in the literature regarding the relationship between traditional peer victimization and cyberbullying: (1) traditional bullying victimization predicts perpetration of bullying and aggression in cyberspace (Ybarra and Mitchell, 2004); (2) cyberbullying victimization leads to direct bullying victimization (Patchin and Hinduja, 2006); and (3) traditional bullying victimization predicts victimization in cyberspace (Katzer et al., 2009; Marsh et al., 2010; Ybarra et al., 2007). Their research tests the last premise - that traditional bullying victimization predicts cyberbullying victimization. The study's results indicated that adolescents who encountered primarily verbal and relational bullying at school had a higher chance of victimization in cyberspace a year later. However, this was not found for adolescents who suffered predominantly physical forms of traditional bullying. These findings emphasize the need for a cross-contextual approach in studies on the stability of bullying victimization.

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