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Understanding Problematic Social Media Use

Dr. Zhang Xiao, Dr. LEUNG, Ka Kuen, Dennis, and their team delved into the complex dynamics between life stress, technostress, and problematic social media use. Their research focused on identifying the symptoms and antecedents of problematic social media use, such as life stress, technostress, and the fear of missing out, and examined how social support and coping strategies could mitigate these effects. The study team employed a longitudinal survey approach to gather comprehensive data over time, providing a robust analysis of the factors contributing to problematic social media use.

The research team conducted extensive literature reviews, analyzed two waves of survey data, and disseminated their findings through academic conferences and journal articles. Their analysis revealed that the fear of missing out, life stress, and social media engagement are significant predictors of problematic social media use, with technostress acting as a crucial mediator between problematic social media use and psychological distress. The study also highlighted the moderating roles of coping strategies and social support in mitigating the negative impacts of technostress and problematic social media use on mental health.

The research activities extended beyond academia, integrating findings into teaching to enhance students' learning experiences. By sharing the results in relevant courses, students were encouraged to critically reflect on their social media behaviors and adopt healthier coping mechanisms. The study's empirical findings facilitated discussion on balancing social media usage and maintaining offline social support systems, providing a deeper understanding of digital well-being among students.

RAISING AWARENESS AND INTERVENTIONS

The study's findings have had a significant impact on public awareness and mental health interventions. A press conference was held to disseminate the research outcomes, attracting attention from the general public, mental health professionals, educators, and policymakers. The event was covered by 13 media outlets, helping to disseminate the research findings widely, enabling a deeper understanding of problematic social media use and its psychological effects, and paving the way for informed policymaking and improved mental health interventions. The study highlighted the importance of social support and healthy coping strategies in mitigating the negative effects of technostress and problematic social media use.

Collaborations with community organizations, including online addiction counselling centers, have further extended the reach of the research. Informational pamphlets and presentations have been distributed to social workers, students, parents, and other stakeholders, providing practical insights and recommendations



for managing problematic social media use. These efforts have contributed to the development of programs and interventions aimed at promoting healthier social media habits and reducing the risks associated with problematic social media use.

The research has significant implications for youth development, particularly in promoting digital well-being and mental health. By identifying the factors contributing to problematic social media use and highlighting effective coping strategies, the study provides a foundation for developing interventions that support young people in managing their social media use. The findings underscore the importance of developing strong support systems and encouraging healthy digital habits, ultimately contributing to the overall well-being and development of youth in a digitally connected society.

“ Promoting healthier digital habits and developing stronger support systems offer actionable solutions to the challenges of problematic social media use, paving the way for improved mental well-being and stronger supporting systems. ”

Related Publications and Presentations

Leung, L., Liang, J., Wan, K.F., & Cheung, M. (2022). Investigate the effects of problematic social media use and technostress on psychological well-being by taking social support as a crucial moderator. *The 20th International and Interdisciplinary Conference on Communication, Medicine and Ethics*, Hong Kong, July 2022.

Liang, J., Zhang, X., Leung, D. K.K., Leung, L., & Cheung, M. (2024). Surfing or suffering? The role of emotional exhaustion, social support, and coping strategies in the relationship between social media use for mood modification and psychological distress. *The 2024 National Chengchi University College of Communication Academic Conference: Exploring Social Media Research in Chinese Societies*, Taipei, July 2024.

Funding: Stress-buffering effects of coping strategies and social supports on psychological distress: A longitudinal panel study of the antecedents of problematic social media use [UGC/FDS15/H13/20]