Social Media and Youth Risk Behaviors: Implications for Health Literacy

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Purpose

The purpose of this study to determine among middle and high school students:

(1) the frequency of use and types of social media among middle and high school students;

(2) the relationships between frequency and use of social media and risky behaviors

(3) health literacy strategies to address social media behaviors

Methodology

(1) Customizing the Roanoke County, Virginia Middle and High School Youth Risk Behavior Surveys to include social media questions on
- Possession of smart phones
- Personal social media accounts
- Types of message sent via social media
- Perception of parent's response to their child's
- internet and social media behaviors

(2) Collecting YRBS data from all Roanoke County, Virginia Middle and High School Students during Spring, 2018

(3) Data Analysis (descriptive statistics, crosstabulations and odds ratios

(4) Identifying health literacy strategies to address findings

Results
(Descriptive)

Middle School Students

✓ 33.6% (n=940) watched screens for three or more hours on an average school day that was not related to schoolwork;
✓ 84.6% (n=2382) received a smart phone before age 14;
✓ 75.6% (n=2107) had a social media account before14;
✓ 26.3% (n=734) had received threatening or intimidating messages online or through cell phones;
✓ 13.9% (n=388) sent threatening or intimidating messages online or through cell phones;
✓ 12.7% (n=350) sent sexually inappropriate pictures or messages using a cell phone or computer;
✓ 24.6% (n=680) reported that their parents would be nervous if they knew what they did on the internet or via cell phone;
✓ 72.1% (n=1988) reported that their parents have clear rules for the use of social media and the use of electronic devices.

High School Students

✓ 41.6% (n=1255) watched screens for three or more hours on an average school day that was not related to schoolwork;
✓ 75.2% (n=2288) had received a smart phone before age 14;
✓ 70.7% (n=2126) had a social media account before age 14;
✓ 40.2% (n=1208) received threatening or intimidating messages online or through cell phones;
✓ 20.3% (n=610) sent threatening or intimidating messages online or through cell phones;
✓ 38.3% (n=1136) sent sexually inappropriate pictures or messages using a cell phone or computer;
✓ 33% (n=971) reported that their parents would be nervous if they knew what they did on the internet or via cell phone;
✓ 57.2% (n=1704) reported that their parents have clear rules for the use of social media and the use of electronic devices;
✓ 29.5% (n=890) used their phone while driving during the past 30 days.

Results
(Crosstabulations and Odds Ratios)

Students who reported that their parents would be nervous if they knew what they did on the internet were:
✓ 2.1 time more likely to report seriously considering committing suicide
✓ 2.0 times more likely to report making a plan to commit suicide
✓ 1.8 times more likely to report a suicide attempt
✓ 1.73 times more likely to report cutting or self-mutilation
✓ 1.7 times more likely to report being bullied
✓ 2.0 times more likely to report being a bystander to bullying
✓ 2.5 times more likely to report bullying others

Students who reported that their parents did not set clear rules around how you use electronic devices and social media safely were:
✓ 1.8 times more likely to report huffing in their lifetime
✓ 2.2 times more likely to report using cocaine in their lifetime
✓ 1.9 times more likely to report using heroin in their lifetime

Next Steps:
Implications for Health Literacy

Developing health literacy strategies to educate students, parents, and the community about the about the connections between use of social media and youth risk behaviors through (1) using plain language to inform target groups; (2) developing strategies (infographics, media campaigns) and designs (pretest/posttest) to determine the extent to which the target groups understand the communications; and
(3) creative strategies such as photovoice and storytelling particularly for middle and high school students.