

The Dark Side of Engaging With Social Networking Sites (SNS)

3

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INTRODUCTION

Although engagement with the deep or dark web may seem to some to be intimidating or possibly threatening, the surface web similarly presents users with challenges which may also be detrimental to one's peace of mind or health. This paper reviews the dark side of engaging with the surface web through the use of Social Networking Sites (SNS), the issues discussed in this paper will also be relevant to users' engagement with the deep and dark web. While SNS have the potential to impact positively on adolescent's health and well-being, the use of SNS has the potential for exposure to possible risks (Guinta & John, 2018). SNS include: Facebook (2018), QZone (2018), YouTube (2018), Twitter (2018), Reddit (2018), Pinterest (2018), Tumblr (2018), Flickr (2018), Whatsapp (2018), Snapchat (2018), Viber (2018), Google+ (2018), Instagram (2018), LinkedIn (2018), Skype (2018), Tinder (2018), Grindr (2018), amongst many others used around the world. Computer algorithms are used to draw people in to frequent use of SNS. Once someone is online and engaging with SNS, more computer algorithms are used to keep the persons attention and hence increase the amount of time spent online. Recommender systems are used to enhance collaborative filtering algorithms which encourage users engagement with Social Networking Sites (Eirinaki, Gao, Varlamis, & Tserpes, 2018; Liu & Lee, 2010). The dark side of engaging with SNS includes: addiction or addictive behavior, child pornography, cyberbullying, fake news, Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO), social comparisons, stalking, amongst many others, which can all lead to neglect of other duties, sleep deprivation, loneliness, isolation, depression, and so forth. The aim of this chapter is to review the negative effects of engaging with SNS and consider what solutions can be proposed to alleviate the damage caused by engagement with SNS.

BACKGROUND

"It is increasingly observable that social media present enormous risks for individuals, communities, firms, and even for society as a whole" (Baccarella, Wagner, Kietzmann, & McCarthy, 2018, p. 431). Now that we as a society are aware of the possible dangers posed by social media, it is time to address all of these potential risks with individuals, communities, organisations, and so forth. By identifying and highlighting these risks and through ensuring that individuals, communities, and organisations are made aware of these risks, only then will it be possible to successfully deal with such risks. "Even with social media executives admitting that their platforms have deleterious impacts, users tend not to question the short- and long-term implications and potential risks of their choices" (Baccarella et al.,

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2018, p. 432). Users should be encouraged to question the short and long term risks of engaging with SNS. This is a discussion in which all members of society should engage, not just parents and school teachers. Many adults are experiencing problems as a result of excessive engagement with SNS. This paper reviews some of the negative effects of engaging with SNS on the habits (addiction and addictive behaviour, exposure to child pornography, cyberbullying) and mental health (fake news, fear of missing out, social comparisons, stalking) of users. In addition, users are encouraged to consider how their use of SNS may be impacting the lives of others (family members, work colleagues, and other online users).

The Dark Web

The dark web represents a number of anonymously created websites which are hosted on the deep web. The dark web is intentionally hidden (Paul, 2018), the content is not indexed for search engines to find, unlike the surface web where the content is indexed and accessible to standard web browsers, for example, Google Chrome (Google, 2019), Mozilla Firefox (Firefox, 2019), or Microsoft Internet Explorer (Microsoft, 2019). The surface web is the opposite of the deep web (also known as the invisible web and the hidden web). The surface web is easily accessible to all using standard web browsers on the internet. The deep web and the dark web are not accessible through standard web search engines and web crawlers.

In a research study conducted by Dalins, Wilson & Carman (2018) the findings suggest that “criminality on this ‘dark web’ is based more upon greed and desire, rather than any particular political motivations” (Dalins et al., 2018, p. 62). The dark web refers to a number of anonymously hosted websites on the deep web which are accessible by using specialized software to hide the Internet Protocol (IP) address. IP addresses are assigned to every device that connects to the internet. A Public IP address can be accessed over the internet, a Private IP address cannot be accessed over the internet but are used in internal networks. A Global IP address is specific to a particular network and all devices using that network. Internet Service Providers (ISP) assign Global IP addresses.

The dark web is part of the World Wide Web (WWW) that is only accessible through the use of specialized software (Monk, Mitchell, Frank, & Davies, 2018). The dark web is an encrypted network (to enforce anonymity) that exists predominantly between The Onion Routing (TOR) encryption tools, servers, and their users (Monk et al., 2018). Users of the dark web have the option to remain anonymous and untraceable. Methods employed to access the dark web are quite involved therefore the dark web is not used by the average user. “The globalization of technology and rise of popularity in cryptocurrencies has changed the face of black-market trade and the actors that carry out these crimes” (Paul, 2018, p. 1). Law enforcement agencies and Government Departments are continuously playing catch up in trying to deal with innovations adopted by black market traders to conceal the money trail. “The internet provides an ever-growing number of ways to hide, launder money and pursue a vast range of criminal activities in ways that are difficult to detect or deter” (Slaughter, 2018, p. 118). The handling of criminal activities conducted online is challenging, expensive and requires sufficient quantities of technical resources. The dark web can be used for illegal activities, such as: the sale of drugs (Mackey, 2018; Norbutas, 2018; Porter, 2018), firearms (Porter, 2018), untraceable cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin (Paul, 2018), child pornography (Dalins et al., 2018), trade in exotic animals (Paul, 2018), sale and purchase of credit card details (Hayes, Cappa, & Cardon, 2018), identify theft (Hayes et al., 2018), money laundering (Dalins et al., 2018; Wegberg, Oerlemans, & Deventer, 2018), amongst others. The monetary cost alone of trying to monitor criminal activities that are conducted online puts a burden on law enforcement agencies and Governments. The Silk Road is a dark net market or an online black market known for the sale of illegal drugs (Dalins et al., 2018; Hayes et al., 2018). It is illegal to use websites that engage with illegal activi-

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