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Portrayals of Violence and At-Risk Populations: Symptoms of Trauma in Adolescents with High Utilization of Social Media

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Abstract

While the concept of internet social media addiction and excessive use has been explored thoroughly, the venues and content of specific types of information, opinion, and graphic images during traumatic events and their effects on an affected population are unknown. The current study examined the role of social media use and posttraumatic symptoms in a population of young adults during a period of escalated violence in the West Bank of Palestine. Patterns of excessive internet use, interactivity of use (via reading, videos, and posting), and symptoms of posttraumatic stress were examined in the context of gender, place of residence, and education status. It was found that posttraumatic symptoms were higher in individuals with patterns of higher frequency and interactivity of social media use. It was also found that those residing in internally displaced refugee camps had higher levels of symptoms, excessive use patterns, and interactivity levels with social media. These findings point to a clear role of social media in periods of violence in geo-political conflict zones that must be explored to mitigate both addictive patterns of use and increased symptomology in an already vulnerable young adult population. © 2018, Springer Science+Business Media, LLC, part of Springer Nature.

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Exposure to violent images; Social media addiction; Trauma

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