Review: Social Media, Aggressive Social Networking, and Psychological Well-being in Adolescents and Young Adults

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Abstract
Despite the general expectation for positive effects of broader and more extensive social interactions on psychological conditions, existing studies of online social networking and psychological well-being have reported inconsistent, even contradictory, findings. This study joins recent scholarly efforts to resolve this stalemate by exploring intervening mechanisms existing between online social networking and psychological outcomes. First, this study reviews possible mediatery mechanisms between online social media use and psychological well-being. Further, it explores another potentially intervening factor concerning the group dynamics characteristics of virtual spaces: online aggressive networking. It is inferred that the dynamics specific to aggressive social networking stems from two characteristic, but previously neglected aspects: i) the inherently selective nature of social networking and ii) the following norms intensified by online disinhibition effects from less-regulated, non-face-to-face virtual environments.

Keywords
social media, aggressive social networking, cyber bulling, psychological well-being

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Seeking and maintaining meaningful social relationships is a vital task in human development. Social relationships and interpersonal interactions have been recognized as an important protective factor of mental health, reducing symptoms of depression, anxiety, and feelings of isolation and loneliness. Since about two decades ago, Internet-based, computer-mediated communication (CMC) has increasingly become a prevailing form of interpersonal communication, bridging various kinds of relationships, eliminating the previous limitations of distance and time. Nowadays, online social media has a profound impact on social life. Especially, the use of social media such as Facebook, Myspace, or Twitter has been dominantly found in young adults or adolescents who have strong needs for peer interactions and a sense of belonging; this online networking often overlaps with pre-existing networks in offline communities such as schools, local communities, and family (Subrahmanyam, Reich, Waechter, & Espinoza, 2008).

As a natural corollary, many studies have investigated how the increased CMC affects psychological conditions and whether this new form of social exchange contributes to the formation or de-formation of communal ties and social relationships among young users. While it is generally expected that the broad and extensive social interactions have positive consequences, inconsistent or even contradictory findings have been reported with regard to the effect of online social relationships on psychological well-being. On the one hand, more interactive, extensive social interactions, enabled by Internet communication, have been argued to result in a decline in psychological well-being of young users (Kim, 2017; Kim, LaRose, & Peng, 2009; Xue, Dong, Luo, Mo, Dong, Zhang et al., 2018). On the other hand, some studies, especially as regards various online self-help groups and social networking, have demonstrated beneficial effects of Internet-based social interactions on individual psychological well-being, mainly through their role of facilitating connections among users with shared interests and personal goals (Coursaris & Liu, 2009; Wright, 2002). Many studies focusing on adolescents also report positive impacts of social media use on social life (Park et al., 2015) and psychological conditions (Antheunis et al., 2016). However, in more defined area of online social networking, the overall beneficial effects on individual psychological well-being and supportive community turn out to be relatively small (Valenzuela et al., 2009). In sum, the causal relations of online social interaction to psychological well-being at least do not appear to be straightforward or linearly proportionate in either direction.

In the face of this stalemate, many researchers have suggested that there are either potential mediating factors between use of the Internet for social networking and