

## **Social Media Use as Self-Therapy or Alternative Mental Help-Seeking Behavior**

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### **Abstract**

Social media use is pervasive in many developed societies. Social Media is a form of digital media and expansive platform that allows users to share information, and socialize with other users (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). There are multiple formats of social media being used by society today. Social networking has become such a large part of the everyday life of people such that many individuals repeatedly post or check their social media accounts. College students use social media to create virtual friendships and relationships that allow them to share information about their personal lives. Information that is shared as posts on social media including personal problems and struggles often elicit both positive and negative feedback (comments and likes). Thus, social media use has caused profound changes in the way people share their emotional and psychological concerns. It is unclear however, whether young adults' use of social media to share their personal problems constitute self-therapy and impact the tendency to seek formal mental health services. This paper examines perceptions on social media use, self-therapy and mental health seeking behavior among college students, as well as factors that mediate this behavior. It also explores the implications for mental health help seeking behavior among this group and proposes best practices for providing them with relevant and timely information.

*Keywords:* social media, self-therapy, mental help, help seeking

## Introduction

Globally, it has been estimated that one fifth of all college students experience mental health issues (Auerbach, 2016). In the United States, it was reported in 2008 that more than 1 in 3 college student experience depression and suicide ideation (American College Health Association, 2008). Blanco et al. (2008) also found that almost half of college students met the DSM-IV criteria for at least one mental disorder in the previous year, including 18% for a personality disorder, 12% for an anxiety disorder, and 11% for a mood disorder. In another study, it was also reported that 6% of undergraduate students and 4% of graduate students reported having suicide ideation (Drum et al., 2009). Lipsen, Lattie and Eisenberg (2018) found that the rates of diagnosis of mental health in college students increased from 22% in 2007 to 36% in 2017. The study also reported that treatment also increased from 19% to 34% within the same period. In a more recent study, it was found that 17% of students showed positive signs of depression, 9% showed signs for major depression, and 10% of demonstrated panic or generalized anxiety disorder (Hunt, 2010).

Mental health problems among college students are an impediment to academic performance and program completion. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI, 2012), 64 percent of young adults in college dropped out due to a mental health problem. Despite the high prevalence of mental health problems amongst college students, the stigma of help-seeking remains a barrier to those who are in real need of professional help or support.

Social networking sites have become increasingly popular in recent times as platforms for sharing different personal information including those related to personal health and well-being (Sauter, 2013). Interaction and friendship are initiated and sustained with other users by commenting on their posts and establishing conversation outgroups. The pervasive nature of social media has placed individuals in a state of constant exposure to the opinions of others. Students in need of input, and support to improve their personal wellbeing may thus consider social media use as an innovative approach to explore solutions for their mental health issues.

## Theoretical Framework

The theoretical model for this study is based on both the theory of planned behavior/ reasoned action and the health beliefs behavior model (Ajzen, 1991; Becker, 1974; Czyz, Horwitz, Eisenberg, Kramer, & King, 2013; Fishbein & Azjen, 1967). The theory of planned behavior/reason action posits that an individual's decision to engage in a particular behavior is based on the outcomes the individual expects will come as a result of performing the behavior. This model also holds rational decisions are the result of intentions, attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). The health belief model predicts that individuals who perceive that they are susceptible to a particular health problem will engage in behaviors to reduce their risk of developing the health problem. Within the context of mental health help seeking via the use of social media platforms, attitudes subjective norms and perceive behavioral control may engender psychological rewards that sustain behaviors that encourage the use of social media platforms (Bohon, 2016). Associatively, an understanding of individuals' assessment of perceived susceptibility, severity, costs, barriers and benefits, can provide insight into why college students may consider social media platforms to be viable alternatives to receive help on mental health.

## **Social Media Use among College Students**

The rise of technology and its ubiquitous characteristic has varying implications for the youth who use them. It has helped increase popularity of social media sites and with it, the number of people who use it. Social media use among young adults, particularly among college students has increased exponentially, along with this increased popularity of social media sites. These platforms have become one of the core mediums for communication among this group, promoting virtual communication while also reinforcing physical boundaries (Peluchette & Karl, 2008). For college students, social media is often an extension of their physical self, allowing them to connect to others who might share similar experiences (NSBA, 2007). It is not uncommon to see groups of students on campuses sitting in close proximity to each other while simultaneously physically removed from each other, with everyone being on a different social media profile on their phones.

According to the Pew Research Center's 2018 report on teenagers' social media use and anxiety, a significant number of students (over 90%) have access to smartphones and report using them daily for varying purposes, often to increase their social capital, including aiding in academic research, communicating with family and friends, keeping up with tasks, and gaining access to information (Pew Research Center, 2018). The intended outcome however can be oppositional, decreasing rather than increasing their social capital. Students can become withdrawn and dissociated from their physical environment and reality, creating an onset of mental health issues including depression and anxiety (Caplan, 2002; Valkenburg, Peter, & Schouten, 2006). This is similar to the findings in the 2018 report from the Center for Disease Prevention and Control on youth and social media use which found that teenagers who constantly use social media including Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube and Facebook have a higher likelihood to report being depressed or feeling isolation from their peers (Data and Statistics on Children's Mental Health CDC, 2018).

In another similar study, Bagroy, Kumaraguru, and De Choudhury (2017) found that college students' use of social media can be either affirmative (positive reinforcement for existing beliefs and conditions) or can be detrimental, exacerbating issues such as anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, sleep deprivation, and negative body image. Students already experience high levels of stress from academics, and often resort to social media to moderate effects of stress.

Historically, research has shown that technology and social media use can have both positive and negative ramifications. On one hand, it aides in increasing social status and can have positive gratifications for users. It increases social support by enhancing group cohesiveness where users seek similar people to interact with. It also helps to create and maintain relationships and share social information and can aide in collaborative learning for academic success. However, social media overuse can result in decreased academic performance and increased mental health problems, resulting from the repeated use of social media to cope with stress and cope with other issues, rather than seeking help from qualified personnel (Al-Rahmi & Othman, 2013; Dunne, Lawlor, & Rowley, 2010; LaRose & Eastin, 2004; Wang, Wang, Gaskin, & Wang, 2015; Whiting & Williams, 2013).

## **Help Seeking Behavior among College Students**

Research shows that mental health problems are highly prevalent among college students (Auerbach et al., 2016; Eisenberg, Downs, Golberstein, & Zivin, 2009; Selkie, Kota, Chan, &

Moreno, 2015). These mental health problems consequently affects students' academic success as well as their relationships with family and friends (Hunt & Eisenberg, 2010, Kadison, & DiGeronimo, 2004, Kessler et al., 2005, Silverman, Meyer, Sloane, Raffel, & Pratt, 1997). According to several research findings, factors such as interpersonal relationships, sexuality, identity development, academic pressures, extracurricular demands, roommate problems, parental expectations, and racial and cultural differences are the most commonplace stress factors among college students (Beiter et al., 2015; Kadison & DiGeronimo, 2004, Mahmoud, Staten, Lennie, & Hall, 2015). Today, we also know that individuals with severe mental health disorder are more at risk of developing substance use or dependence compared to the general population (Lehman & Dixon, 2016; Routledge; Weitzman, 2004; Zeanah, 2018). For instance, Blanco et al. (2008) compared the prevalence of alcohol use disorders between college students and their same-age peers. His findings indicated that the prevalence of alcohol use disorders was significantly high among college students however; the prevalence use of drug and nicotine was low.

Results of two national surveys indicated that there is an increasing prevalence of mental illness among college students. Results of the two national surveys illustrated that there is an increasing prevalence of mental illness among students. In the first survey conducted in 2008, 95% of campus psychological counseling centers directors reported a significant increase in severe psychological problems among their students (Gallagher, 2009). The result of the second national survey, done in 2008 by the National College Health Association illustrated an increased proportion of depression diagnosis among their students; 15% since 2000.

Most university and college campus settings in the United States offer emotional and mental health care services, however, not many students seek for help or make actual contact with professionals in the campus (Blanco et al., 2008). National policymakers have identified the stigma surrounding mental health and mental illness as an important barrier for college students who are seeking mental health care (Clement, 2015; Drum et al., 2009; Gulliver, Griffiths, & Christensen, 2010). Gender and age also have been reported as having an influence on intentions to seek professional mental health help. Findings show that women are more likely to exhibit positive attitudes towards seeking mental health professionals than men and older adults exhibited more favorable intentions to seek help from primary care physicians than younger adults (Berger, Levant, McMillan, Kelleher, & Sellers, 2005; Mackenzie, Gekoski, & Knox, 2006).

Despite current legislation and disability rights, stigma and negative attitudes toward seeking help from professionals are still further barriers to professional help-seeking. College students, in particular, are so concerned about being seen as "mental" by their peers and others. This consequently decrease the intention to seek help among this population (Rickwood, Deane, & Wilson, 2007). In this regard, Drum et al. (2009) conducted a national research using an anonymous web-based survey to provide insight about the spectrum of suicidal thought, intent, and action among 26,000 undergraduate and graduate students at 70 colleges and universities. They also examined the student's formal and informal patterns of help-seeking. Specifically, they asked those students who considered attempting suicide in the last 12 months if they ever shared their suicidal thoughts with anyone. The result indicated that 46% of undergraduate and 47% of graduate students preferred not to tell anyone about their suicidal thoughts because they were afraid to be judged by their peers. However, those who disclosed their suicidal thoughts with a friend, or a peer found it tremendously helpful. Drum et al. (2009) reported no significant correlation between gender and intensity of suicidal thought.

In a related study, Eisenberg, Downs, Golberstein, and Zivin, (2009) conducted an empirical study associated with help-seeking behavior among 5,555 college students from a diverse set of 13 universities. Findings showed that both public stigma and student's own stigmatizing attitudes shape their beliefs towards mental health help-seeking. The researchers also found that perceived public stigma was noticeably higher than personal stigma and personal stigma was significantly and negatively associated with measures of help-seeking among college students. In terms of socioeconomic factors, they reported that male, younger, Asian, international, more religious and poor income as those with a high level of personal stigma.

In another study done by Gaddis, Ramirez, and Hernandez (2018) using data from over 60,000 students in 70 U.S College and University between 2005 and 2009 found that there is a high level of stigma toward mental health, and seeking for mental health treatments that consequently led to less treatment-seeking behavior among students. They also found that school-level stigma was negatively associated with student's self-reports or disclosure of having suicidal ideation and self-injury. Moreover, school-level stigma is negatively associated with medication use, counseling and therapy visits, and to a lesser degree, informal support.

Multiple research shows that stigma is not an only barrier that prevents college students to seek for mental health care. Other factors are: lack of time, privacy concerns, a lack of a perceived need for help, limited awareness or knowledge about available services or insurance coverage, skepticism about treatment effectiveness, lack of emotional openness, and financial constraints (Eisenberg, Downs, Golberstein, & Zivin, 2009; Givens, & Tjia, 2002; Hunt, & Eisenberg, 2010; Tjia, Givens & Shea, 2005).

The past decade has witnessed many new advances in the Internet and the popularity of online resources and social media particularly among college students. According to recent information released by Statista, The United States has close to 275 million internet users in 2018 and this number is estimated to continue to grow to 310.1 million in 2022. As reported by the United States Census Bureau, Department of Commerce Economics and Statistical Administrations in the year 2016, 89 percent of households had a computer at home, and they had access to the internet. According to the Pew Research Center (2018), Facebook and Instagram are the most popular social network websites among Americans (68% Facebook and 35% Instagram). Social media has gained popularity over the last decade has become one of the most convenient methods of communication, creating and sustaining relationships with others (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, Sponcil & Gitimu, 2013) however, research shows that not all of the Facebook friends are considered as genuine or trustworthy in a crisis (Fan, & Gordon, 2014; Pew Research Center 2018). College students constitute the largest number of social media users, and use social media for social interaction, information seeking, entertainment, relaxation, communicatory utility, expression of opinion, information sharing, and surveillance about others (Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2008; Sponcil & Gitimu, 2013).

In this modern world, social networks play an important role in the help-seeking process. Several research findings have suggested that the patterns of help-seeking behavior are influenced by whom the sufferer consults with at first and when deciding whether to seek for mental or medical care (Birnbaum, Candan, Libby, Pascucci, & Kane, 2016; Calnan, 1983). The help-seeking literature has emphasized on the important role of family and friends in seeking help for mental health issues (Rickwood, Deane, & Wilson, 2007). When young people identify a mental health issue, they usually prefer informal support rather than professional health care (Rickwood et al., 2007). College students might find social media such as Facebook or Instagram a safe place that allows them to freely disclose their needs and feelings without

being worried about being recognized or stigmatized by others. They might perceive this type of informal way of seeking help to safeguard themselves against the potential public stigma or negative attitudes in the real world.

Further, although research has yet to investigate the influences and effectiveness of online mental health seeking, this method of help seeking is growing rapidly particularly among young people (Edwards-Hart, & Chester, 2010; Naslund, Aschbrenner, Marsch, & Bartels, 2016). This might be because of the advantages and capabilities that online interventions can have to overcome many barriers to seek help, particularly as they relate to being concerned about confidentiality, anonymity, self-reliance, and stigma (Andersson, & Titov, 2014; Rickwood, Deane, & Wilson, 2007).

The purpose of the study was to examine whether college students consider social media to be a viable outlet to share their emotional and psychological problems. Additionally, the study also examines the extent to which the use of social media as an alternative form of help seeking for mental health or constitutes self-therapy. The following research questions were addressed:

RQ 1: Do college students consider social media a viable outlet to share their personal problems to receive counsel or advice?

RQ 2: Is there a statistically significant relationship between college student's social media use to share personal information, receiving advice and mental health help seeking behavior?

RQ3. Do demographic factors such as gender and level of education moderate the relationship between sharing of personal information on social media and help seeking behavior?

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

Undergraduate and graduate college students enrolled at a large Historically Black University (HBCU) in the southeastern region of the U.S were surveyed for the study. This demographic was chosen because current research suggests that majority of college students use social media on a daily basis (Pew Research Center, 2018). Additionally, students from this population also experience a myriad of traumatic issues, leading to mental health complications (Brown, 2015) and might also experience barriers, perceived or otherwise, to receiving care (Barksdale & Molock, 2009). Previous research (Balcazar, Suarez-Balcazar, Taylor-Ritzler, & Keys, 2010; Cooper et. al., 2003; Marini, Graf, & Millington, 2011; Matthews, Corrigan, Smith, & Aranda, 2006; Salimi, 2018; Yuker, 1988) have also implicated negative disability attitudes (stigma and discrimination) as barriers to mental health seeking. African Americans in general have been reported to have strong stigma and discrimination surrounding mental illnesses and have a low tendency towards receiving treatment (Cooper et. al., 2003; Matthews et al., 2006). The sample for the study comprised 143 participants; 52 graduate students and 91 undergraduate students. Seventy-nine participants were female, whereas 64 participants were male. Further, 20 participants identified as white, 5 participants as Hispanic, 5 participants as Asian, 84 participants as black or African and 34 as multiracial. The age of participants ranged from 17 to 35 years ( $M = 23.9$ ,  $SD = 4.62$ ).

### **Instrument**

A survey was developed to collect data for the study. The survey contained 10 questions. There were two demographic questions (e.g., educational status and gender), five social media use

questions (e.g., social media platform, frequency of use, tendency to share emotional problems on social media, tendency to receive advice/counsel or suggestions from friends on social media) and three questions on mental health seeking behavior questions. The three mental health seeking questions were adopted from the Mental Help Seeking Intention Scale (MHSIS). Two of the authors, and two graduate students reviewed the instrument for evidence of validity. The review focused on the followings: (1) clarity of instructions, (2) clarity in wording, (3) relevance of the items, (4) absence of biased words and phrases, (5) proper formatting of items, and (6) use of Standard English.

### **Procedures**

Approval and support for the study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of the University. Following approval, participants were recruited through flyers posted on departmental notice boards. Information sessions were organized to discuss the purpose of the study, confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of participation. Interested students picked up a survey packet from a designated mailbox and dropped them off at the same mailbox after completion. Each survey packet contained an informed consent, and the survey questionnaire. The surveys did not collect any personal or identifying information. No financial incentive was provided to students, for participation in the study.

### **Data Analysis**

Data from the completed surveys were extracted into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 25.0) program for analyses. Descriptive statistics such as simple percentages and averages were used for participants' demographic variables. Regression analyses were completed to answer the research questions.

### **Results**

#### **RQ 1: Do college students consider social media as a viable outlet to share their personal problems to receive counsel or advice.**

Table 1. shows participants responses on sharing personal or emotional concerns to receive counsel or advice. The result of the descriptive statistics reveals that only 4(15%) of male participants consider social media to be an extremely likely outlet to share their personal problems to receive counsel or advice. In comparison, 26(22.2 %) of the female respondents considered social media as an extremely likely viable means to share their personal problems to receive counsel or advice. Relative to educational levels, 8(11%) of graduate students are very extremely likely to share their personal experiences on social media to receive counsel or advice compared to 22(30%). This indicates that undergraduates are almost three times likely to share their personal or emotional concerns on social media to receive counsel or advice. Additionally, the results also indicate that overall, approximately 21 percent of the sample indicate a willingness to share personal or emotional concerns on social media to receive counsel or advice.

		Slightly	Moderately	Very Extremely	Total
GENDER	Male	0(0.0%)	22(84.6%)	4(15.4%)	26(100.0%)
	Female	2(1.7%)	89(76.1%)	26(22.2%)	117(100.0%)
Total		2(1.4%)	111(77.6%)	30(21.0%)	143(100.0%)
EDU LEVEL	Graduates	2(2.8%)	61(85.9%)	8(11.3%)	71(100.0%)
	Undergraduates	0(0.0%)	50(69.4%)	22(30.6%)	72(100.0%)
Total		2(1.4%)	111(77.6%)	30(21.0%)	143(100.0%)

Table 1. Sharing Personal Problems on Social Media to Receive Counsel or Advice

**RQ 2: Is there a statistically significant relationship between college student's social media use to share personal information, receiving advice and mental health help seeking behavior?**

Multiple regression analysis was used to test if the extent of sharing personal problems and accepting or receiving advice on social media significantly predicted participants 'seeking of mental health services. Table 2 shows the results of the regression analyses, and the results indicate the two predictors explained 53.9% of the variance ( $R^2 = .29$ ,  $F(2, 140) = 28.60$ ,  $p < .01$ ). It was found that sharing personal or emotional problems significantly predicted seeking counseling services ( $\beta = .26$ ,  $p < .001$ ), as did receiving advice ( $\beta = -.53$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Specifically, whereas the results indicate that the more college students shared on their personal or emotional problems or received advice from social media, the less likely they are in seeking mental health services.

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	22.330	2	11.165	28.603	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	54.649	140	.390		
	Total	76.979	142			
a. Dependent Variable: SEEKING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES						
b. Predictors: (Constant), EXTENT TO WHICH THEY WOULD ACCEPT ADVISE, SHARING PERSONAL OR EMOTIONAL PROBLEM ON SOCIAL MEDIA						

Table 2. Relationship between sharing on social media and use of mental health services

**RQ3. Do demographic factors such as gender, age and level of education moderate the relationship between sharing of personal information on social media and help seeking behavior?**

The results of the regression indicated the overall model was significant,  $R^2 = .148$ ,  $F(7, 135) = 3.36$ ,  $p = .002$ . As shown in Table 3, it was found that there was also a significant interaction between education level and sharing on social media when predicting seeking counseling services ( $b = -1.505$ ,  $t(135) = -3.754$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Also, there was a significant main effect for educational level on seeking of mental health services ( $b = 1.65$ ,  $t(135) = 3.30$ ,  $p = .001$ ). This suggests that the higher the educational level of students, the less level they are on share personal information on social media, and the more likely they are to seek counseling services. Neither gender nor age or their interactions with sharing on social media were significant



predictors of seeking mental health services. Results indicated that there was no significant interaction between age and sharing on social media when predicting seeking mental health services ( $b = .439$ ,  $t(135) = .519$ ,  $p = .60$ ). There was also no significant main effect for age on seeking mental health services ( $b = .120$ ,  $t(135) = .33$ ,  $p = .74$ ). Similarly, there was no significant interaction between gender and sharing on social media when predicting seeking mental health services ( $b = -.439$ ,  $t(135) = .519$ ,  $p = .60$ ). There was also no significant main effect for age on seeking mental health services ( $b = -.237$ ,  $t(135) = -.387$ ,  $p = .70$ ).

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	-1.845	2.373		-.777	.438
	Gender	-.452	1.167	-.237	-.387	.699
	Edu level	2.426	.734	1.653	3.303	.001
	Age	.019	.058	.120	.332	.741
	Sharing of personal or emotional problem on social media	1.242	.845	1.052	1.471	.144
	Gender Sharing	.206	.397	.439	.519	.604
	Age Sharing	-.004	.021	-.111	-.203	.839
	Edu. level Sharing	-.939	.250	-1.505	-3.754	.000
a. Dependent Variable: SEEKING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES						

Table 3: Moderated regression analysis of demographical factors with sharing of personal information on social media and help seeking behavior

## Discussion

This study examined social media use as self-therapy or alternative mental help-seeking behavior among college students. The results of the study showed that a moderate amount of college students use social media to share their personal concerns as a means to elicit advice or counsel. These results confirm previous findings that online help-seeking behavior is becoming increasingly common among young adults (Edwards-Hart, & Chester, 2010; Naslund et al., 2016). Fullagar (2005) notes that the young people including college students prefer to seek help online via social media due to the affective nature of help-seeking and the anonymity a virtual environment provides. Sharing on social media may be preferred because it provides college students the opportunity to interact without the judgement and surveillance of adults (McDermott & Roen, 2016). The results also indicate differences in the sharing of personal concerns on social media to elicit help between gender and academic levels. This is consistent with previous studies that female, and undergraduate college students are more likely to seek help compared to their male counterparts or graduate students (Vidourek, King, Nabors, & Merianos, 2014). Graduate students may tend to minimize their mental health concerns due to fear of being judged or stigmatized (Vidourek et al., 2014).

The results of the study also show that the more college students shared on their personal or emotional problems or receive advice from social media, the less likely they are in seeking mental health services. This finding is also in agreement with Fullagar (2005) that overall, young people such as college students have a preference for sharing personal problems and

for input from peers (more like a community) with similar situations who share their experiences, or pain and not individuals considered as expert, but who can be considered to be an outsider to their reality. Social media sites may also become preferred sources of information, because of accessibility and the capacity of applications to convey immediacy similar to that of face to-face conversation.

Relative to demographic factors and their relationship to sharing on social media and seeking mental health services, the results showed that the higher the educational level of students, the less likely they are to share personal or emotional concerns on social media, and the more likely they are to seek counseling services. This finding is consistent with Wyatt and Oswalt (2013) that graduate students were more likely to seek out formal counseling services compared to undergraduate students. Perhaps, graduate students have less perceived barriers to help seeking compared to undergraduate students. Graduate students may be more mature, knowledgeable, and may have prior experiences with formal help seeking.

The overall findings are also significant relative to the response to mental health by African American students. The study findings are consistent with Lipson et al. (2018) that although African American students have a high of diagnosis of mental health disorders, but only 40% of students utilize formal mental health services due to perceived stigma and cultural perceptions about seeking mental health. Gaston et al. (2016) reported that a misconception among African Americans in general is that “Black Americans” are ‘strong,’ and do not need mental-health services (p. 686). Although African American college students unlike older generations are more likely to seek mental health services, many still struggle with the fear of being judged or misunderstood as a result of their mental illness, and prefer to rely on their own ability to deal with or seek out solutions to their mental illness (Camacho, 2016; Gaston et al., 2016).

Our study is not without limits. First, due to the use of a self-report measure (survey), students’ attitudes toward use of formal mental health services may have been misrepresented or underreported by respondents. Second, the response categories on the survey instrument may appear atypical (extreme to moderate) to describe the degree of severity as it may appear that there is a too much of a gap between moderate and severe. Third, contextual factors and knowledge and experiences with mental health services could also be a contributing factor.

### **Implications for Future Research**

This study has significant theoretical and practical implications for mental health, healthcare, and public health professionals as well as college administrative staff in charge of ensuring that students are receiving the care they need. It also has implications for policies surrounding mental health service provision in colleges. College students, especially the undergraduate population, represents a group experiencing the onset of mental health problems. The college campus is therefore one of the optimal environments for identifying, treating and preventing mental health issues (Bruffaerts et. al, 2018). When policy makers and college administrators understand this, it can help to foster mental health policies on campus that have lasting implications for the students. Policies could include identity protection for students, making it easier for them to take the first step to seeking and receiving care without the added burden of thinking about how their peers may perceive them; it makes help seeking that much easier and more personal for them (Eisenberg, Golberstein, & Hunt, 2009; Stone & McMichael, 1996).

Again, while the definition of health has shifted from the traditional World Health Organization's "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity," current definitions incorporate the ability for oneself to adapt and self-manage social, physical, and emotional challenges, given the current social media era we are in (Callahan, 1973; Huber et. al, 2011). Young people are increasingly becoming more digitized, using technology and social media in all aspects of their lives from networking to seeking social support and providing support to others (Al-Rahmi & Othman, 2013). It is imperative to meet them at this level, therefore as an extension of this study, future research can focus on the motivations for using technology among college students and the gratifications gained from it, to determine how to provide the right information for students who use technology to seek help for mental health issues.

Health professionals providing services on college campuses can incorporate into their service provision plans, the results of this study which shows that students at different levels exhibit different reactions to seeking information. Undergraduate students who are more likely to share their problems and seek help online, are also more likely to be dependent on their smartphones, creating a toxic dependent relationship. On the other hand, graduate students who are more likely to use services provided on campus, are also more likely to interact with personnel rather than people on social media. This gives mental health professionals on college campuses a unique advantage to incorporate findings to create targeted health and media campaigns for undergraduate and graduate students that will have a deeper impact on them. (Bian & Leung, 2015).

Future research can therefore focus on other behavioral and social determinants that contribute to the mental health problems among this particular group, taking into consideration that the college campus in itself, presents challenges for mental health. This could include stigma and discrimination associated with seeking help for mental health issues, as well as the availability of customized services to meet students' needs. For instance, health professionals can create virtual help communities that targets students who are more comfortable with that option and provide safe spaces for students to share their problems and get the help they need. By understanding the different characteristics college students represent, it can help to foster engaging and less negative environments to help decrease the occurrence of mental health stigma and discrimination. This can motivate more students to seek professional help (Blanco et al., 2008).

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