

Background

- Emotion dysregulation is positively associated with anxiety and related psychopathologies (Mennin et al., 2005).
- During the COVID-19 Pandemic, hundreds of millions of people have been forced to socially distance themselves from others out of a concern for safety and public health recommendations.
- This isolation has contributed to an increased engagement in online social media, in order to help people stay informed and connected (Kaya, 2020).
- Although social media has the potential to inform the public, increased social media use has also been associated with both increased anxiety and emotion dysregulation during the current pandemic (Gao et al., 2020).
- However, the relationship between increased COVID-19-related social media use, emotion dysregulation and increased levels of anxiety has not been fully explored.

The goal of this study was to investigate whether higher levels of engagement in COVID-19 related social media mediates the relationship observed between emotion dysregulation and anxiety.

Methods

Participants

- Online Amazon Mturk users, ($n = 323$) from the United States
- Age: 19-71; $M = 36.57$; 38% Female
- Race & Ethnicity: 72.3% White; 11.0% Hispanic; 9.3% African American; 7.4% Asian

Measures

Demographics Survey

Hours/Day Engaged in COVID-19

Related Social Media Scale

(Less than 1 hour, 1-2 hours, 3-4 hours, 5-6 hours, 7 hours or more)

Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale 18

(DERS 18; Victor & Klonsky, 2016)

Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale 21

(DASS 21; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995).

Data Analysis

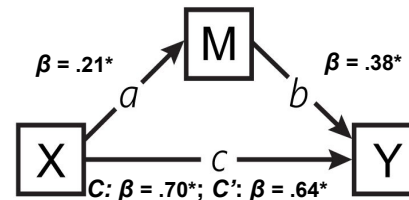
- Ordinary Least Squares Regressions were run with emotion dysregulation and social media use as predictors and anxiety as the outcome.
- In another regression, emotion dysregulation predicted social media use.
- A mediation analysis was run in order to test whether COVID-19 related social media use mediates the relationship between emotion dysregulation and anxiety using the Sobel Test (Sobel, 1982).

Results

Main Result

- Emotion dysregulation was associated with both anxiety ($\beta = .70, p < .0001$) and social media use ($\beta = .21, p < .0001$). Social media use was also associated with anxiety ($\beta = .38, p < .0001$).
- A mediation was observed such that increased social media use partially mediated the association between emotion dysregulation and anxiety (Sobel Test $Z = 3.58, p < .0001$).

Model of the Statistical Relationship



Key

- X = Emotion dysregulation
- Y = Anxiety
- M = Hours/Day engaged in COVID-19 related social media
- a = Path coefficient between emotion dysregulation and COVID-19 related social media use
- b = Path coefficient between Hours/Day engaged in COVID-19 related social media and anxiety
- c = Path coefficient between emotion dysregulation and anxiety
- c' = Path coefficient between X and Y with the mediator included
- * = Asterisks indicate significant coefficients ($p < .0001$)

Discussion & Limitations

- The findings imply that individuals who have difficulty modulating their emotions and engage in longer durations of COVID-19-related social media, may be at an increased risk for the development of anxiety.
 - With this knowledge, the public may better understand the importance of limiting their time on COVID-19-related social media and regulating their emotions when they do choose to engage.
- ### Limitations
- The study is based on a random sample of users engaged in Amazon Mturk which may increase the chances of self-selection bias in the sample.
 - This is a cross-sectional and retrospective report study.

References

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