

The Correlation Between Social App Use and Individual Information Anxiety in the Information Age and the Solutions

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Abstract: Social applications are widely used in the information age. However, the frequent use of social media has brought about the problem of information overload. As a result, individual information anxiety has gradually become a focus of attention. This information overload can hurt individual mental health. The relationship between it and individual information anxiety needs to be further explored. This paper aims to explore the relationship between information overload and individual information anxiety in social applications and propose solutions. The study found the negative impact of information overload on individual mental health in social applications. The methods of alleviating individual information anxiety are put forward respectively from two aspects: individual and media. On the one hand, individuals can deal with the anxiety brought by social media by controlling the time they use social media, choosing reliable information sources and improving information literacy. On the other hand, social media should be censored, provide meaningful interaction, and meet user needs to jointly address the impact of social apps.

Keywords: Social app, information anxiety, information overload, comparative psychology, information authenticity

1. Introduction

With the continuous development of society and technology, mobile terminals and the Internet came into being, and people's social methods are gradually diversified, and face-to-face communication is no longer the only way to socialize between people. Social media is a double-edged sword, in addition to improving communication efficiency, promoting the dissemination and sharing of information and other positive effects, it also brings some negative effects to individuals, information anxiety is one of them.

In existing papers, research and elaboration have been conducted on the impact and information anxiety brought about by social media. In these papers, some authors found that the anxiety caused by false information during the COVID-19 epidemic led to an unsatisfactory public health environment in many areas [1]. Some authors have found that the severity of depression and anxiety in older adults may be related to certain forms of online socializing [2]. Some authors have found that social anxiety is not solely caused by the use of INS, but rather by social comparison psychology and

self-esteem as influencing factors [3]. Some authors have found that both online and offline health information queries can lead to an increase in health anxiety among rural residents [4].

Although the existing research perspectives are relatively comprehensive, here are relatively few corresponding suggestions for addressing the issues brought about by social media. Drawing upon antecedent research, this article will proffer specific recommendations aimed at mitigating and forestalling the primary catalysts of information anxiety stemming from social media.

The article aims to undertake a comprehensive study of the information anxiety issues that arise from the influence of social media on individuals. The article will be divided into three main sections, namely, the substantiation of social media's capacity to induce information anxiety in individuals, the explication of the primary causes behind individuals' information anxiety caused by social media, and the formulation of relevant recommendations for individuals and social media platforms to address and analyze these underlying causes.

2. Impact Analysis

Aaron T. Beck proposed that anxiety is caused by negative thinking and wrong perception of environmental threats, including excessive concern about danger, excessive speculation and exaggerated fear of negative situations [5]. Specifically, information anxiety refers to the state in which an individual feels anxious and uneasy about information overload or too much information. It is usually a mental state caused by too much information, information overload, or information that cannot be processed effectively. People who use social media frequently may be more likely to feel anxious or lonely, especially if they make social comparisons with others or pay excessive attention to others' social performance. The Canadian Mental Health Association found that high school students who spent two hours a day browsing social media reported higher levels of anxiety and depression and were more likely to have suicidal thoughts.

These days, some even opt out of social media. They want to focus more on real-life relationships, reduce information overload and stress, and reduce the negative impact that social media can have. In 2019, a survey published by a Finnish public relations agency revealed that nearly a third of Finnish social media influencers have considered quitting social media. Research has shown that the stressful nature of the social media environment and the constant competition to publish quality content can be very exhausting [6]. Social media is a major platform for information dissemination and communication. Withdrawing from social media can result in a loss of connection with social circles, news events and global dynamics. This may make individual information access become limited, resulting in an information island. Social media has changed the way people communicate with each other, and quitting social media means a change in social interaction and communication methods, which may reshape people's social patterns. To sum up, when using social apps, individuals may experience information anxiety, which may even lead individuals to opt out of social media.

3. Cause Analysis

At present, many scholars have analyzed the main reasons for the influence of social media on individual information anxiety. Bernhard et al. believe that the information overload of social media is one of the causes of individual information anxiety [7]. Ismail proposed that people's concerns about the authenticity and credibility of information would affect individual anxiety [8]. This paper argues that the main reasons for the influence of social media on individual information anxiety are information overload, concerns about information authenticity and credibility, and social comparison pressure, which makes individuals feel anxious and uneasy on social media.

3.1. Information Overload

Based on the literature review of organizational science, accounting, marketing, and other related disciplines. The concept of information overload can be defined as information overload occurs when the amount of information exceeds the human ability to process information [9]. The influx of information on social media can lead to decision-making difficulties for the recipients of the information. Individuals may have difficulty making decisions due to their inability to process or filter this information effectively, resulting in anxiety and unease [7].

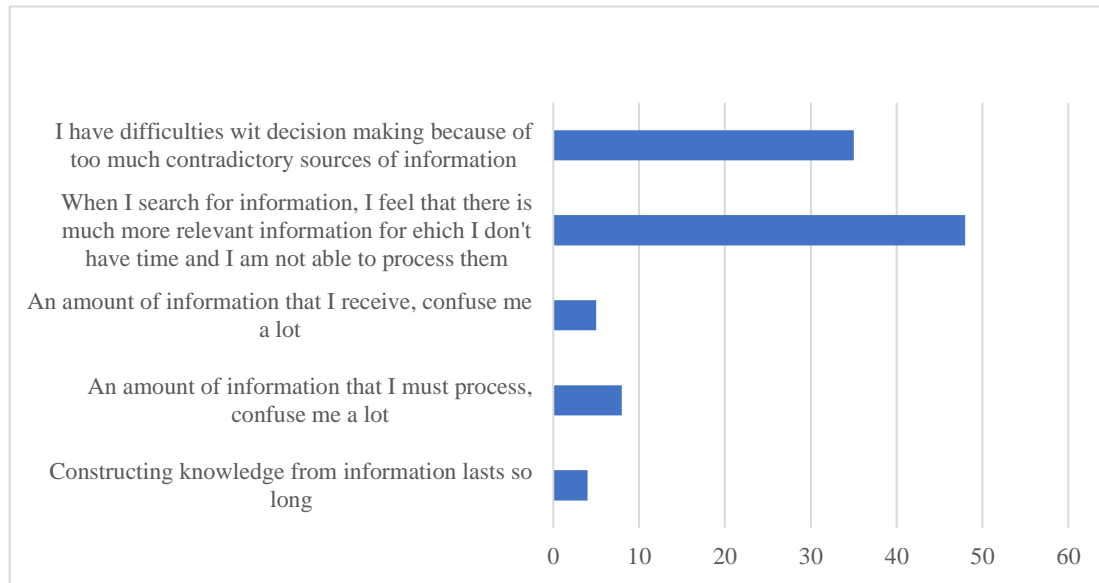


Figure 1: The number of information overload in students' lives [10].

Figure 1 shows the performance of information overload in students' lives. About half of the students (48%) felt that during their search for information, there was so much relevant information that they didn't have time to process it. Sometimes it is difficult for individuals to determine which information is the most important or relevant. This can lead to individuals being hesitant to process information and unable to determine which information needs to be processed first. A large amount of relevant information may be beyond an individual's ability to process, resulting in an individual's inability to effectively sift through, process, and understand this information. 35% of students have difficulty making decisions because of conflicting sources of information. Different sources of information may provide conflicting information, making it difficult for individuals to determine which information is accurate or credible.

3.2. Concerns about the Authenticity and Credibility of Information

Concerns about the authenticity and accuracy of information can also lead to information anxiety. Users who use social media, in addition to their personal need to stay in touch with known friends and family, also use social media to "reach out" to knowledge experts in certain areas of interest to them. For this group of users, the credibility of authors and the quality of shared knowledge will be important factors leading to the authenticity problem of social media [8]. Due to the diversity and volume of information sources, it is sometimes difficult to find reliable, trustworthy sources of information, which can lead to concerns about the authenticity of information. Worrying about the source, credibility, and authenticity of information can cause anxiety. Fear of being influenced by this information or being unable to judge whether it is true or false, resulting in information quality anxiety.

The proliferation of digital, social, and mobile media has provided news consumers with numerous channels of information. These channels vary widely in credibility and quality [11]. However, such a wealth of information often exceeds one's attention limits, leading to news fatigue and paralysis of news analysis. Make it difficult for individuals to assess the credibility of information they encounter on the Internet, thereby avoiding misinformation.

3.3. Social Comparison Stress

People differ in their tendency to compare themselves and others, an individual difference variable called social comparison orientation (SCO). Social networking sites provide information about others that can be used for social comparison. Social networks provide an ideal platform for social comparison to take place. People say they use social networking sites to make social comparisons, especially when viewing other people's posts and photos [12]. On social media, people tend to show their wonderful moments and achievements, creating an idealized picture of life. People will look at this content and compare it to their lives and feel that their lives are less than perfect or less happy than others. In addition, features such as likes, comments, and sharing on social media may enable individuals to pursue virtual validation, hoping to be recognized or affirmed by others. When there is not enough recognition, feelings of anxiety and stress can arise. The consequences of such upward comparisons should be quite negative. Both long-term and temporary upward social comparisons on social media are associated with negative consequences. By comparing themselves to more successful people, individuals may devalue their abilities and worth and doubt their potential and abilities. This can lead to feelings of anxiety and insecurity.

The constant stream of information, endless notifications, and false, negative, or anxiety-provoking content on social media platforms often make people feel uneasy and anxious. At the same time, the pressure of social comparison on social media also intensifies individuals' excessive attention to information and insecurity, resulting in psychological pressure and burden. This situation makes it difficult for people to break away from their dependence on information and overuse of social media. The emotional state that leads to information anxiety affects the individual's mental health and quality of life. In today's information age, information is easily available, but it also brings the problem of information anxiety.

4. Suggestions

Based on the above research, this article finds that the use of social media does have a certain impact on individual information anxiety due to factors such as information overload, information authenticity, and social comparison psychology. In this regard, this article proposes the following suggestions to alleviate these problems.

4.1. The Users

4.1.1. Control the Time Spent Using Social Media

Firstly, people can try to control their time using social media in their daily lives, such as regularly using social media, implementing digital fasting, or putting down their phones and choosing to exercise, listen to music, etc. to divert their attention and relieve their mood. Concerning physical activity, the "Report on the Mental Health Development of Chinese Citizens (2021~2022)" reveals that engaging in regular exercise contributes to the prevention and alleviation of anxiety [13]. Regarding the act of listening to music, a scholarly study conducted by Serbian researchers suggests that patients experiencing chest pain in the early stages of a heart attack may find relief by dedicating 30 minutes daily to indulging in their preferred music. Remarkably, after seven years, individuals

who engaged in long-term music therapy exhibited a reduction of one-third in their anxiety scores [13]. In addition to alleviating anxiety, regulating social media usage time can also reduce the risk of information overload, allowing for greater focus on self-discovery and recognizing one's strengths, thereby mitigating to some extent the occurrence of a social comparison mentality. From this, it can be seen that although exercising and listening to music are simple and common methods, they greatly help with information anxiety and have almost no restrictions on their use. People can use them anytime in their daily lives.

4.1.2. Selecting Reliable Sources of Information

Furthermore, it is essential to opt for reliable sources of information, as the quality of content is also of utmost importance. When individuals are inundated with a large volume of information, it is crucial to maintain an open mindset. Instead of pursuing a complete understanding of all information, it is important to prioritize the reliability of the known information. For example, during the COVID-19 period, social media platforms have been flooded with diverse analyses and predictions about the virus, which can be overwhelming and lead to anxiety and confusion. However, upon closer reflection, one may realize that much of the information in the mass of information has no reliable source, which may be unfounded speculation or rumors under panic. If people could remain relatively calm when facing virus-related information and choose to believe and accept information released by official media or relevant departments, it would not only reduce the amount of information received to a certain extent, avoid information overload, but also ensure objectivity and authenticity of information, and avoid unnecessary anxiety caused by receiving false information. The text advises individuals to prioritize official media or other reputable platforms while searching for and consuming information, to ensure the authenticity and objectivity of the information at hand.

4.1.3. Enhancing Media Literacy

Furthermore, in this era of information explosion, individuals, whether as information disseminators or recipients, should continually enhance their media literacy. With the advancement of the internet, the digital divide has shifted towards disparities in media literacy, encompassing individuals' proficiency in media usage, information retrieval capabilities, social skills, as well as disparities in discursive power and the ability to leverage the internet for self-advancement [14]. Without a high level of media literacy, individuals may find themselves ill-prepared when confronted with a vast amount of information, leading to either excessive skepticism or unwarranted trust. Therefore, enhancing media literacy to augment critical thinking, information retrieval, and information filtration capabilities is of paramount importance. This not only enables individuals to keep abreast of the zeitgeist, sidestep the entanglements of the digital divide, but also enhances their capacity to process information, thereby maintaining an objective and composed mindset within the all-pervasive mediatic milieu.

Finally, if an individual's information anxiety is significantly severe, impacting daily life or escalating to a psychological disorder, seeking assistance from professionals such as psychologists is advisable to obtain more specialized and scientifically grounded guidance.

4.2. Social Media

4.2.1. Strengthen Auditing

First and foremost, there is a need to bolster the scrutiny efforts about social media platforms. This proactive approach not only enables the proactive filtration of a portion of objectionable content for users, mitigating the likelihood of information overload but also serves to safeguard user privacy to

a certain extent, fostering increased user trust in the respective social media platforms. In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on privacy concerns within the public sphere. As per a survey questionnaire, 52.6% of respondents expressed significant concern regarding privacy breaches, while 55.7% indicated apprehension regarding the potential collection of their personal information by social network users [15]. The unauthorized exposure of private information not only violates users' sense of security and entitlements, leading to information anxiety but also fosters a pervasive sense of skepticism towards the implicated social media platforms. In extreme circumstances, it has the potential to incite public sentiment upheaval or precipitate legal entanglements. In this context, this article serves as a prompt for users to consistently bolster their awareness of privacy protection, while also urging social media platforms to actively enhance their technological infrastructure, conduct thorough content reviews, safeguard user privacy, and minimize the presence of detrimental content and privacy breaches on their platforms.

4.2.2. Increase Meaningful Interaction

Additionally, social media platforms possess the capacity to promote meaningful exchanges, thereby establishing a healthy online atmosphere. An exemplary instance of this can be observed in Xiaohongshu, a burgeoning social media platform that has garnered substantial popularity in China. The platform is not only compartmentalized into various categories wherein users can exchange and acquire expertise, encompassing domains like fitness, gastronomy, travel, cosmetics, and literature, but also proactively dispatches notifications to individuals tailored to their holidays, personal interests, and so forth, by suggesting pertinent engagements. These engagements may include joining running collectives, sharing travel snapshots, advocating popular seasonal television dramas, enlisting skiing mentors, and more. The platform endeavors to remain abreast of prevailing trends and presents content that is healthful and sanguine. Users are allowed to select topics of personal interest for perusal at their leisure, thereby reducing the likelihood of information overload and unwarranted social comparisons. Furthermore, they can access more profound and superior content, engage with individuals of similar disposition, and, to some degree, alleviate social isolation and cognitive unease. It is manifest that the fostering of a wholesome online ambiance is indispensable.

4.2.3. Provide Corresponding Services

Finally, social media can provide users with corresponding services for current hot topics. In contemporary society, social media, serving as an indispensable utility for the majority, fulfills not only the relational and informational requisites of users but also caters to their service-oriented exigencies akin to those met by the internet [14]. For example, in response to information anxiety, social media can provide online psychological counseling or a combination of online and offline activities, such as inviting professionals for consultation, interaction, etc., to help users alleviate and solve the problem. In this manner, not only can user issues be addressed more precisely, fostering greater user retention and deeper integration into their lives, but it can also cultivate a positive media image, enhancing the platform's credibility and influence.

5. Conclusion

In summary, this article mainly comprehensively studies the reasons for the impact of social media on individual information anxiety, including information overload, concerns about information authenticity and credibility, and social comparison pressure. At the same time, this article also proposes corresponding suggestions for individuals and social media to alleviate the problem based on these reasons. For individuals, this article suggests controlling their time using social media, selecting reliable sources of information, and improving their media literacy. For social media, this

article suggests that relevant departments should do a good job of reviewing, increasing meaningful interaction, or providing corresponding services to users. This will have a certain positive effect on individuals troubled by information anxiety, social media developers, and the information environment.

Authors Contribution

All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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