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WAR-RELATED NEWS AND IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH: A REVIEW

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Abstract: This study examined the impact of social media and war-related news on one's mental health. The study is a review of literature where the authors found that negative or conflict news may affect your attitude and perception of the world, which negatively affects everyday activities. Also, when exposed to war threats or information, there is a possibility of experiencing the actual stimuli resulting in a variation in the person's mood and mental health. These violent media contents cause sorrow, anxiety, and psychological changes (Petersen et al., 2014). The exposure to graphic violence causes numbing when people become accustomed to seeing these pictures or videos, reducing the impact on emotional reactions, war news, or scary media. Negative news might trigger depression, PTSD, or anxiety. Also, the person may have a pessimistic outlook on life, ignoring or concealing many pleasant aspects. The study revealed that those exposed to terrible news or war news are more likely to experience acute stress. Direct witnesses reported lasting acute stress symptoms but not severe acute stress (Alan and Daryl, 2014). Researchers say limiting media exposure, relaxing, and doing other healthy things can help prevent mental disorders and improve quality of life (Kelli A et al., 2002).

Index Terms - Social media, Mental health, Violence, War

I. INTRODUCTION

Reports and media show that most news causes stress and other feelings such as anxiety, fatigue, and sleep loss (Markham Heid, 2020). Even people checking on the information is not merely more minor regarding adverse and other events that cause the issues. The reason is the individual's overexposure to the recent news headlines or news on specific adverse events (Jay J. Van et al., 2020). Even if it is essential to get current information, it is understandable that negative news can give concerns such as stress or anxiety. And the way of news delivered or produced in this period is not a health-friendly way which I think is more openly focused and said widely irrespective of the emotions each faces. Also, people who are more engaged in negative news are likely to have problems sleeping, mood swings, signs of PTSD, etc. The news, including violent, depressing, and emotionally charged, makes a lifestyle change (Christine, n.d., 2017).

War and related news are always in the top headings as it's defined dramatically and even threatening. In October, political scientist Shana Gadarian wrote in the Washington Post that the media is having a competition between the journalists and editors with incentives for creating emotionally and visually powerful stories and things that take the attention of each individual (Fedorov & Fedorov, 2021). This type of emotional instability projecting within us is usually driven by our own natural negative bias that may lead us to pay attention to the things that are having negative and threatening nature, including war and terrorism (Christine, n.d., 2017).

Television and media that pertain to have been a source of giving information have transformed mood and made the negative news affect anxiety and sadness. Studies and research show that this type of mood worsens the observer's worries, and the chances of not being directly relevant to the news are also observed (Donald and Matt, 2016). Increases in anxiety and stress vary with the exposure to the news that comes in life, and mental health issues can also be projected with physical ailments. Also, stress-related problems, inflammation associated with rheumatoid arthritis, cardiovascular diseases, and other health issues can link with cortisol, a stress-related hormone. It also occurs a change in health in individuals exposed to the negative impacting news (Schneiderman et al., 2005).

News is not an infectious or contagious pathogen, and it is predictable for humans, says Chris Peters, an associate professor of media and communication at Aalborg University Copenhagen. And mentions that it's complicated to understand how people in the aggregate will respond to the war-related news. It can be found that the way we engage with the news and how we encode and interpret it each day makes our daily mood and mental health change. And we could see that if the individual finds the news relating to the war or threatening information makes a mess in life, changing the habit of overexposure or changing the way of interaction with the news could be altered to maintain homeostasis within your daily life (Hatcher, n.d, 2019).

From a psychological point of view, exposure to negative or violent content news or media causes severe and long-lasting psychological effects beyond the feelings of disapproval and pessimism. Dr. Graham Davey, a British psychologist, specializing in media violence's psychological effects, suggests that exposure to violent media can increase stress, anxiety, depression, and PTSD. And negative news impacts the individual's mood if the news broadcasted depicts suffering content and emotional components of a particular event or story. Davey also mentions that overexposure to negative news can affect the individual's worries, and is likely to get worried about personal issues and consider personal worries more threatening and severe. And occurs a tendency to worry about the problems a lot and face difficulty controlling and feeling more stressed than usual (Carolyn, 2015).

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Researches show that exposure to negative or war news that affects your mood affects how the person interprets the world around you (MURTHY & LAKSHMINARAYANA, 2006). Suppose the news makes the person more anxious or sad. It shows that the individuals are more focused on negative or threatening events subconsciously, and there are chances of observing regular events also in a negative one. When exposed to threatening or news on war, there are chances of exposure with images and video clips related to the actual violence. Even if that does not affect a lot, there are chances of internalizing the negative stimuli that can affect the mood and cause the individual to feel negative. And the images change the overall mood to a negative, resulting in sadness and anxiety and resulting psychological changes (Petersen et al., 2014). Researches have shown that viewing traumatic events or images can cause PTSD-like symptoms. A study conducted in 2001 on this issue found that even watching the events of 9/11 on TV triggered individuals resulting in PTSD symptoms, including reduced self-confidence, worry about future terrorist attacks, etc. We could see that the amount of time the event is presented on the TV and watched is directly proportional to the severity of symptoms shown (Silver et al., 2013).

Even when looking at the people working within the media affects the images or events exposed. Studies show that employees working in the media field exposed to uncensored images of violence or negative images in nature cause emotional distress. And the journalists or workers who are regularly exposed to violent video and picture footage scored high in the PTSD index, which includes general anxiety, avoidance, etc., and high involvement of alcohol consumption, depression, and other physical signs of physical ailments. And with the overexposure to graphic violence process sensitization among individuals where they become more sensitive and gets to be more emotionally distressed on exposing to images resulting with a numbing process where the individuals get habituated to seeing this types of images or videos making a more negligible effect on emotional responses or observation of war news or threatening natured media (Alyssa, 2021).

DSM- 5 gives the diagnostic criteria for PTSD. It mentions that the symptoms of this disorder are being experienced or observed in people who are recognized to have experienced something traumatic and those who witness life-threatening traumatic situations (Crocq & Crocq, 2000). And we could say that it is usually normal for an individual to experience depression, PTSD, or anxiety on exposure to negative news. And there can be observed a chance of the individual to perceive the world in the light of negative aspects that may lead to ignoring and overshadowing many things that are not negative. Study results show that with overtime exposure to the negative news or war news are likely to experience high acute stress than those who don't give much time to media. And those who had a direct experience of the events faced persistent acute stress symptoms but were less likely to experience high acute stress (Alan and Daryl, 2014). Overexposure to the media and imageries can activate the fear circuitry in the brain and causes the individual to remind of the past exposures leading to the development of PTSD. Also, the individual's prior life history on health and family could be a reason for the stress and other triggering events. As we have already mentioned, there is also a relation between the quantity of time and the content the individual is being exposed to that can cause the onset of PTSD symptoms or any other mental health consequences. A study conducted in 2007 with 179 college students were being exposed to a news broadcast of 15 min and later with a relaxation exercise of 15 minutes. And it was found that the negative feelings inside the students' minds came to a baseline level after the relaxation technique or exercise. And we can see that diverting the attention of each individual as a group or in an individual can change the negative feelings that arose in the individuals after being exposed to the negative news or media (Michaela Allaby, 2017).

It is also observable that the negative news can cause a change in the circadian rhythm resulting in sleep disorders, eating patterns, and problems concentrating. And too much exposure to negative-natured news can be defined to be toxic. As I have already mentioned, over-consuming this news activates the sympathetic nervous system. It releases adrenaline and cortisol as a product, which then the individuals experience the symptoms of stress, anxiety, fatigue, depression, and sad moods. In concerns to these issues, researchers have suggested that for a better outcome, decreasing the time limit or exposure to the media, using relaxation techniques, engaging in other healthy activities after the news can reduce the onset of mental health disorders and improve the quality of life (Kelli A et al., 2002). And we can conclude that intense exposure to harmful or war news has a negative impact on mental health. Through proper guidance and methods by health professionals, it can help increase the positive side of the person's life.

Conclusion

This study focused on identifying and reviewing the effects social media and war-related news' have on one's mental health. And we could find that bad or conflict news influences your mood and how you perceive the world (Murthy & Lakshminarayana, 2006). And usually, people unconsciously focus on unpleasant or frightening occurrences, and there is a risk of seeing recurring events negatively. Exposure to war threats or news is a risk of seeing pictures and video recordings of actual violence. Even if it doesn't influence much, unpleasant stimuli might be internalized, affecting the mood and making the person feel bad. And these visuals affect the general mood, causing melancholy, anxiety, and psychological changes (Petersen et al., 2014). Seeing distressing experiences or pictures has been linked to PTSD symptoms. We can see that the amount of time the event is shown on TV and watched is directly proportional to the severity of symptoms shown in a study conducted in 2001 on this issue (Silver et al., 2013). Also, we could find that unfiltered pictures of violence or unpleasant views of nature create mental discomfort in media workers. The overexposure to graphic violence results in a numbing process where individuals grow acclimated to viewing these sorts of images or films, creating

a reduced influence on emotional reactions or observation of war news or frightening natured media. Negative news might cause melancholy, PTSD, or anxiety in certain people. And there is a possibility that the individual may see the world through a negative lens, disregarding or obscuring many positive elements. The study found that people who spend more time exposed to bad news or war news are more likely to feel acute stress than those who don't. Direct witnesses reported persistent acute stress symptoms but were less likely to have severe acute stress (Alan and Daryl, 2014). Researchers indicate that reducing media exposure time, adopting relaxation techniques, and engaging in other beneficial activities can reduce the onset of mental health illnesses and enhance the quality of life (Kelli A et al., 2002).

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