Twitter, Millennials, and Nursing Education
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Background
Experimental multi-site repeated measures study exploring the effectiveness of an educational intervention delivered via Twitter to increase resilience and sense of support and decrease perceived stress in baccalaureate nursing students.

Do You Tweet?
- Twitter is a form of social media/social networking
- Free, microblogging system
- Users can send messages ("tweets") containing up to 140 characters
- Ability to reach many individuals in real-time without regard to distance
- Easily accessible by mobile devices and computers
- Found to be a useful means of communication, information delivery, and as pedagogical tool
- Rapid rise in use, especially among millennial college students
Who are the Millennials?

- Prefer teaching/learning formats that are fast, relative, and succinct
- Enjoy team collaboration
- Like to be rewarded for successes
- Expect immediate feedback
- Real-time communication
- Quick access to information

Millennials and Learning

- Twitter use rapidly rising, especially among young adults ages 18-24
  - 31% (2012), 18% (2011), and 16% (late 2010)
  - 20% daily use (2012), compared to 9% (May 2011)

- Correlation between Twitter use and Smartphone ownership, 18 to 24
  - Largest increase in smartphone ownership of any demographic group in same time period
  - 20% smartphone owners use Twitter
  - 13% report daily use
**Study Design**

- Multi-site repeated measures experimental design
- Pre-test, post-test, one-month follow-up
- Follow-up survey
- Dependent variables: resilience, sense of support, perceived stress
- Convenience sample (n=70)
  - Volunteer participants
  - Ages 19-23
  - Enrolled full-time as junior BSN students
- 2 university colleges of nursing in Southeastern U.S.
- Random assignment:
  - Experimental group
  - Attention placebo control group
- 6-week intervention

**Intervention**

- Experimental group received 4 tweets/wk designed to increase resilience.
- Weekly themes focused on enhancement of protective factors: social support, positive emotions, humor, knowledge of health behaviors, self-efficacy, and effective coping
- Control group received 4 tweets/wk that mimicked time and attention without intended effect
- Follow-up survey to assess opinions about intervention and use of Twitter (both groups)

**Procedure**

- 2 protected Twitter accounts created on 2 separate user accounts
- Participants invited to “follow me”
- Detailed Twitter instructions provided to participants
- Researcher did not participate in dialogue (e.g., no “replies”)
- 2 identical web-based anonymous surveys (to differentiate responses between groups) sent via SurveyMonkey to assess participants’ opinions of intervention and use of Twitter
Results

- SurveyMonkey – content analysis
- Were Twitter messages helpful?
  - Why? Why not?
- What did you like about experience? Dislike?
  - 87.5% experimental group respondents and 80% control group respondents indicated they found intervention beneficial.
- Participation diminished as intervention progressed.
  - More interaction and feedback

Positive Perceptions

- Simple to use
- Fast
- Tweets found to be helpful to reduce stress
- Enhanced reflection
- Promoted positive emotions
- Reinforced nursing knowledge
- Encouraged engagement and collaboration with other students
Negative Perceptions

- Some participants did not check Twitter account daily
- Lack of interaction
- Lack of knowledge re: technology options (e.g. mobile apps)

Researcher Perceptions

- Fast
- Easy
- Effective means of communication/support/engagement
- Multiple potential uses within nursing research, practice, and academia.
Future Use

- Twitter tutorial session (live or web-based)
- Strategies to encourage early adoption and increased participation
- Researcher participation (e.g. feedback to replies)
- Increased length of study, larger sample, broader geographic region, and increased number of sites
- Other nursing student populations (e.g. non-traditional students, online programs, etc.)
- Academia (onsite and online): to reinforce course content, promote critical reflection/critical thinking, promote sense of community, and promote faculty-student engagement

Questions

References available upon request
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