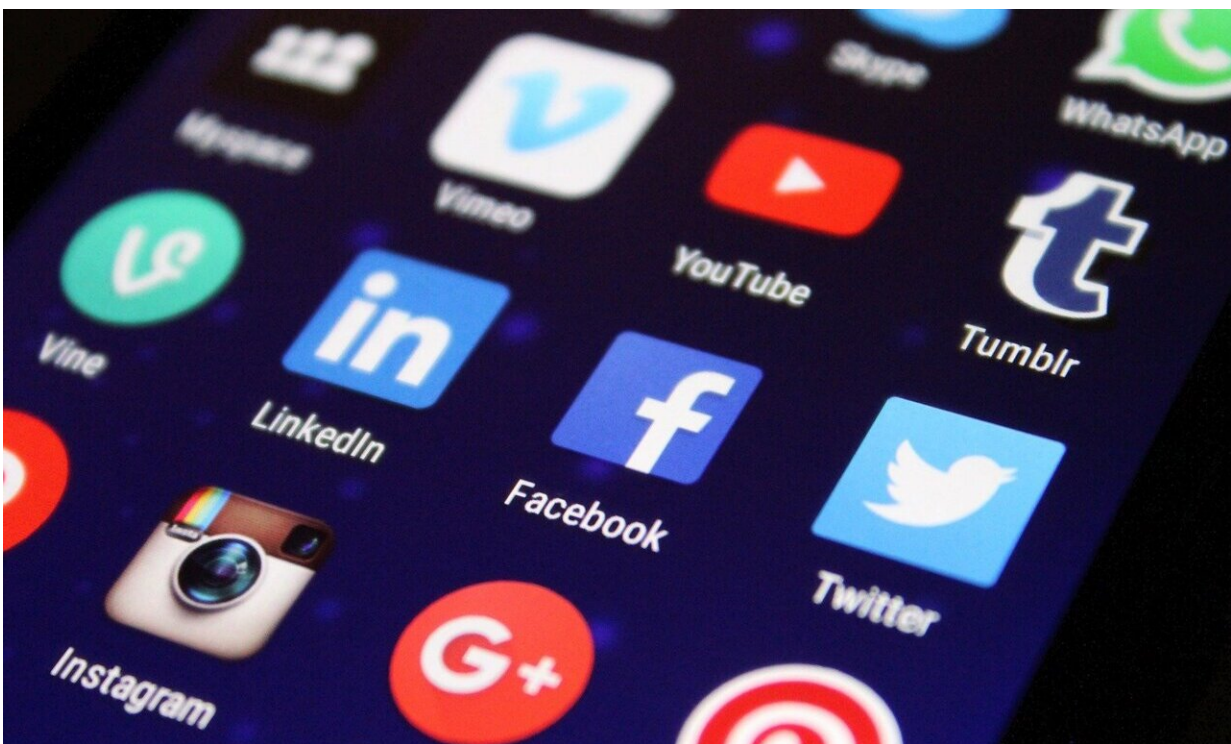


Discrimination on social media results in higher depression, anxiety among minority males

December 2 2020, by Jessica Drouet



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Exposure to ethnic discrimination on social media is associated with higher symptoms of depression and anxiety among young Hispanic males, according to a study by researchers at Florida International

University's Robert Stempel College of Public Health & Social Work.

"Surprisingly, there is a lot of research about cyberbullying and social [media](#) but there really wasn't a thorough study that looked at how exposure to ethnic discrimination on social media impacts mental health," said Miguel Ángel Cano, lead author and principal investigator of the study and associate professor in the Department of Epidemiology at Stempel College.

Ethnic discrimination and [hate speech](#) on social media have been in the spotlight during recent national discussions and demonstrations over racial and ethnic injustice, leading to boycotts of social media platforms by advertisers. A 2018 Pew Research Center survey found that 73 percent of Hispanics reported using Facebook, which has the most users in the U.S.

The study, published in the *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, was based on surveys of 200 young Hispanic adults, ages 18-25. Half of the participants were from Miami-Dade County, Florida and half from Maricopa County, Arizona. Researchers found that, upon exposure to social media posts such as photos, memes or videos that include ethnic discrimination, users felt higher levels of depression and anxiety.

"When participants were exposed to ethnic discrimination on social media directly, or vicariously on a friend's social media page, it was found to have adverse effects on mental health," Cano said. "A viral video or meme may not always be directed at you, but when you see someone publicly discuss your social or ethnic group in a negative or derogatory way, it, unfortunately, can have a negative impact on mental health."

The men in the study, however, were more adversely affected than the women by increased exposure to ethnic discrimination on social media,

reporting higher levels of depression and anxiety, even though both men and women had about the same amount of exposure to that type of material on social media.

"Men may be more affected by [ethnic discrimination](#) in social media because it is likely that they are exposed to more egregious forms of racist/discriminatory content that specifically depicts men," Cano said. "Consequently, this may have a stronger or longer-lasting impact, and it may also threaten their concept of masculinity and threaten their perceived social status and power."

Previous studies have shown that young adults experience higher symptoms of depression and anxiety when compared to adolescents and other adult age groups. When considering the high usage of social media among this age group, especially Hispanics, [social media discrimination](#) may be a factor that compounds the risk of developing poor mental health, Cano said.

The researchers determined that more studies on the topic were needed to develop culturally appropriate, evidence-based interventions for adolescents and young adults.

More information: Miguel Ángel Cano et al, Exposure to ethnic discrimination in social media and symptoms of anxiety and depression among Hispanic emerging adults: Examining the moderating role of gender, *Journal of Clinical Psychology* (2020). [DOI: 10.1002/jclp.23050](https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.23050)

Provided by Florida International University

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