Screen Use and Health Habits of Youth

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Theory.

Uri Bronfenbrenner’s Bioecological theory describes development of learned behavior:

- Frequency and intimacy of contact influence on individual behavior
- Microsystem - child develops/learns behavior from the parents includes child’s temperament and personality
- Mesosystem – less frequent direct contact e.g., peers
- Exosystem – even less direct/frequent contact doctors/nurses
- Macrosystem – government policies.

Study Goals.

Using Bronfenbrenner’s Theory, this study examined influences on health habits (at least one serving/day of fruit and vegetables; no smoking; 30 minutes/day exercise in youth) in youth (ages 15-18 years) by:

- Identifying sources of health information (i.e., parents, screen use, others), and
- Measuring the contribution of self-esteem on the relationship between sources of information and healthy habits.

Methods.

This poster presents preliminary results of the Youth Survey (3rd component) of a three-component study.

- Instruments were designed with Community Advisory Group assistance.
- Variables/Scalings:
  - Demographic Characteristics
  - Rosenberg Self Esteem
  - Ethnicity Self-identification
  - Hopefulness
  - Service Usage
  - Discrimination
- Sampling Frame: high schools.
- Sample: youth, ages 15-18 years.
- Ethics’ Committee Approval (IRB) and Ministry of Education Approval

Results.

- Although the vast majority of youth (n=122) had access to the computer internet, television or cell phones (98%), the amount of screen use varied between 1-19 hours per day (mean=4.22, SD=2.99).
- Screen use was the most common source of health information for youth (57.4%). Among youth who obtained health information from friends (14.8%), 88.9% of them also obtained information from screen use, while among those who obtained health information from their parents (62.3%), only 56.6% of them also obtained health information from screen use.
- Neither screen use nor self-esteem were related to health habits.

Sources of Health Information Among Youth

- Friends: 14.8%
- Screen: 57.4%
- Parents: 62.3%

Conclusions.

- Youth use health information from many sources.
- These preliminary data do not support previous studies’ findings that longer hours of screen use or poorer self-esteem are associated with poorer health habits.
- For youth, screen use is so endemic that it qualifies as being part of the mesosystem; consequently, influence on youth is weak.
- Information dissemination must include parents and the internet, as youth glean information from all these sources.

References.