

## The necessity of using web-based social networks in increasing the sexual literacy of young people

### ABSTRACT

Health literacy is a dynamic concept that is defined by the capacity of people to acquire, interpret and understand health information and services that are necessary for making appropriate decisions and has different dimensions. One of its dimensions is sexual health literacy. Obtaining information on sex has various challenges for people in the society. Web-based social media is one of the most effective and powerful tools through which various types of information can be obtained. This technology allows people to easily interact and communicate with each other through the Internet and learn. Considering the various capabilities of web-based social media, it can be used as one of the options for teaching sexual health literacy of young people. Therefore, blogs, microblogs, wikis, and social networking sites create opportunities for health professionals to create ways to educate, listen, and interact with youth about health-related issues. Of course, the use of Internet-based social networks has advantages and disadvantages that should be considered.

**Keywords:** internet, social networks, sexual literacy.

► **Citation:** Rostami M, Navkhasi S, Barati M. The necessity of using web-based social networks in increasing the sexual literacy of young people. *Journal of Health Literacy*. Summer 2023; 8(2): 9-11 .

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Received: 08 January 2023

Accepted: 23 March 2023

Doi: 10.22038/jhl.2023.71117.1396

## Dear Editor

Health literacy is a dynamic concept that has different dimensions. One of its dimensions is sexual health literacy, which is a set of knowledge, attitudes and beliefs, motivations and personal ability to access, understand, evaluate and use information related to sexual health in daily life in order to negotiate, judge and decide. Regarding sexual health care, it refers to promoting health, relationships and wellness (1). Access to sexual health knowledge and multiple sources of information can be one of the factors related to sexual health literacy. One of the key issues in the social context of young people's daily life that affects their ability to search for information is shame and embarrassment associated with sexual issues (2). Studies show that neither schools nor parents are the main sources of sex literacy information (3). According to the high-published statistics of the amount of access to the Internet by teenagers and young people (2) in today's world, the question arises whether it is possible to use web-based social networks to increase the sexual literacy of young people?

The young generation has the most access to the Internet all over the world. Studies show that about 68.3% of teenagers aged 15 to 19 have access to the Internet; On the other hand, research on 500 American teenagers and young adults showed that the media as a source of information has surpassed parents and schools by a long distance (4). And many teenagers turn to the Internet and social networks to obtain sexual information (2). It is estimated that nearly 80% of young people have an account on social networking sites (5). Social media is also a source of some problems. Positive links have been identified between social media and risky behaviors during adolescence (5); The uncontrollability of published content (anyone can publish whatever they want) - rapid

and viral dissemination of content (even if it is false) - failure to control biased or incomplete information (creating misunderstanding) can have serious consequences (6).

However, web-based social media is one of the most effective and powerful tools through which various types of information can be obtained (5). This technology allows people to easily interact and communicate with each other through the Internet, learn, receive materials and share resources (5). Some social studies show that young people usually do not want to search for sexual health information due to various reasons, including social stigma, lack of interest, lack of proper services, cost, and risk denial (7), so blogs, microblogs, wikis, Social networking sites provide opportunities for health professionals to develop ways to educate, listen, and engage with young people about sexual health issues (7). The Internet and mass media are seen as facilitators of sexual discourse within the constraints of the real world. Because modesty in sexual discourse is considered as an obstacle to receiving sexual health information. Also obtaining information about sexual processes and negotiation skills and self-confidence in young people who learn these skills on the Internet can strengthen their power in the real world (4).

Therefore in the use of social networks to increase sexual literacy, the following can be suggested: It is better for responsible government organizations in the field of health to be the main sources of providing correct information with reliable evidence-based sources to people on social networks, and providing information that is appropriate to the level of understanding of all people; So that any person with any level of literacy can understand it correctly; Responsible organizations monitor what other people publish on the web; Pay attention to age, ethnic, cultural,

social and economic differences in the materials presented on sexual health; Use different features of social networks.; A suitable space for interaction (to clear ambiguities and prevent misunderstandings) and people's communication with each other while preserving their privacy should be created and the use of humor in conveying sexual health messages should be used because the possibility of publishing humorous messages can be more widely distributed in between users of social networks. All of the above can help in increasing the sexual literacy of young people and adolescents, preventing risky behaviors and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, strengthening the foundation of the family, and ultimately improving the health of young people in society.

**Consent for publication:** Not applicable

**Conflicts of Interests:** No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

**Funding:** None

**Author contributions:** All authors contributed to this project and article equally. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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