

## **Overcoming Barriers to Using Social Media in Youth Work**

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### **Introduction**

The rise of social media over the last five years has changed the way how youth handle personal and professional information about their life (Garner & O'Sullivan, 2010; Giffords, 2009). These days' youths are employing social media as part of communication with friends; increasing contacts, sharing subject, discovering self-characteristics, hanging out and using content, retrieving information and learning. Despite the fact that the youths today are mostly connected by social media, it is not surprising that there is also a rise in the usage of social media by youth worker practitioners in the youth development programs. Youth workers employ the Internet to get into the study, collect data, prepare online therapy, and deliver community care to the youth. It also helps the professional youth workers in a way to enhance the professional skills since it tries to connect the youth workers with the digital technologies in the professional life.

Despite the helpful usages of social media in youth work, arguments endure existing for practitioners (Reamer, 2013). Some youth workers were unsure of whether this trend to focus on insufficiencies guides to better service, or whether it has practically the exact opposite effect – with possibly catastrophic results (Chenot, 2011). Some youth workers also argued that youth's lives are so entrenched in the social media that it is not a choice as to whether the youth service must employ the social media. Together if the youth work is unsuccessful to welcome the usage of technology and enhance his skills of using social media, there is a danger of becoming out-of-date to youth who uses these sites and then the work of the youth worker would essentially become ineffective. Without such interconnectedness, both will not be able to support each other. There is undoubtedly a role for youth work practice through the social media in terms of welcoming a new era for youth work in a significant way, supporting the digital skill and competency and enabling youth to cope with some of the genuine risks associated with using the social media. Thus, the main aim of this paper is to explore the extent, value and development of the use of social media

as a tool in youth work professional and also to identify some of the challenges of using social media sites that arise and need to be overcome.

### **Youth Worker**

Youth workers are individuals who work with youth to ease their individual and social development and are responsible for the success of youth programs. While social workers are concerned mainly with social problems, youth workers facilitate the development of human capital in youths (Gambrill, 2008). They work straightforwardly with youths to enable the individual, communal and educational growth of them (Stone, Garza, & Borden, 2006). Youth workers are practitioners who engage with youth for providing the youth with the enhancement skills and the need of youth to enter adulthood (Ahrens et al., 2011). According to Bell (2007), the youth worker practitioner should realize that their work involves youth development which is: (a) Formed by the 'large portrait'; (b) About youth being connected; (c) Based on a reliable method; (d) Occurs via quality relations; (e) Activated when the younger generation partake; and (f) Getting information. Youth workers carry a responsibility on their shoulders in facilitating young person's future career path and personal lives. And that is why professionalism is required to be built in the youth worker. Thus, multiple studies have shown that professional youth work is essential for reducing negative youth behaviors and increasing positive development and healthy transition into adulthood (Grossman, 2007).

To be a professional, youth workers must have a high level of skills and knowledge associated with the work they are involved in. They must be updated on professional development, uphold certain ethics, and ensure that their work is of the highest quality. With such expectations, professional youth workers should be prepared for practice with sets of skills for effective work. This implies that a youth worker cannot simply jump into the practice without preparation through developing the core competency skills. Recently, proactive role of the youth workers towards social media could help the professional youth workers in a way to enhance the professional skills. Youth work characteristically of its qualified promise to encouragement, training-oriented instruction, and social fairness is a normal fit for employing social media in the youth work settings. Youth workers have said that social media is best employed in their professional roles

when it aids especially the young. The professionals in the field of youth work cannot ignore these sites and must encourage other professionals to explore these more deeply.

### **Social Media and Youth Work Profession**

Youth workers' usage of technology has the ability to help poor youth. Particularly, social media can improve communication and be employed as a constructive instrument in the youth work. It assists youth workers to keep informed with progress in the plan, associated works, and create a positive online presence and provide the support youth workers have traditionally done simply with the added facet of the virtual world – finally, there are profits in understanding how to employ social media as youth work means. Furthermore, social media create a new space for a new assessment of youth work standards relating to the voluntary engagement of youth, changing the balance of power between youth and adult, and concentrating of the significance of relationships to young people recognized as part of networks and groups when supporting their social and personal development. According to Davies and Cranston (2008), youth work can involve social networking sites as one or more of:

- 1) An environment in which youth need support and supervision.
- 2) A tool for encouraging youth works events.
- 3) A communicating instrument for interacting with youth.
- 4) A tool for encouraging youth's inspired expression, involvement and individual and communal growth.
- 5) An early point to work from in assisting youths mature their abilities, interests and competences across a variety of subjects and issues.
- 6) A platform for novel approaches of online youth work.

Thus, social media provides a range of prospects to complete the existing youth work practice and shape new models of work with youth.

### **Applying the Social Media for Youth Work Profession: Barriers and Responses**

As youth workers become mindful of social media for youth work profession, the following step is applying social media in practice. There are numerous obstacles to applying social media and more investigations are required to comprehend the best methods to apply these sites in the youth work practice. As part of this work, it is vital to recognize possible challenges to the social media

application and possible responses. After reviewing several studies about applying social media (e.g., Duncan, Yarwood-Ross, & Haigh, 2013; Judd & Johnston, 2012) we have recognized the most usual obstacles to the application. Additionally, we propose possible measures that may assist the application of social media. Our replies are not intended to lessen the contests but rather to deliberate possible choices for defeating obstacles in using the social media for the youth work practice.

### ***1) Barrier: Ignorance of privacy settings***

In the digital era of social media limitations amongst individual lifestyles and professional practice become vague. Over time, there can be no pledges that information posted on sites will stay confidential. Social media users can establish their privacy sets to let access to others' networks allowing just those known as "acquaintances" to read their account. The main apprehension for youth workers is that information sent on sites is no longer confidential but in the open sphere, letting information to be accessible to others although the youth worker does not admit patrons as peers in the social media sense. This increases fears about privacy between individuals and professionals for the users of social media.

### ***Response 1***

It is suggested that youth workers must observe their own Internet presence to warrant that the individual and professional info on their sites and, to the extent possible, content posted about them by others, is suitable. Youth workers also require allowing for the suggestions and dangers of placing private info on sites for instance work, contact details and pictures of the clients and must not do so if they feel their confidentiality will be compromised.

### ***2) Barrier: Blurred Boundaries***

Boundaries perhaps obscured when users read personal information about their youth worker. As social media permit adherents inadequate domination over who will ultimately be able to observe material that they send at any given time, clients, managers, and teammates may learn information about youth workers that could concede their professional relations and undesirably influence the youth worker's status and the career of youth work. Sustaining suitable professional borderlines is mainly problematic and hard when youth workers do not distinguish who will finally gain access to their private information.

### ***Response 2***

Take rational steps to avert the younger client access to youth workers' personal media networking to evade boundary misunderstanding and unsuitable dual associations. Youth workers shall be alert that communal association in cultural groups based on race, culture, philological, sexual orientation, identity, disability, faith, and other personal interests may generate boundary confusion and inappropriate dual relationships. Perhaps, a client who is a "friend" of their youth worker on sites might initiate to observe the youth worker as an actual friend. It is the duty of the youth worker to sustain boundaries so that the client does not become confused about the nature of the relationship with the youth worker.

### ***3) Barrier: Lack of knowledge and expertise***

One of the difficulties recognized amid the study has been reported an issue with the language of 'digital media'. A much-shared challenge through the nations has been an apparent shortage in media skills. Some countries report demonstrations that most of the youth workers felt that they be short of personal ability; they did not have enough information on digital media; organizations have been slow to the resource training opportunities for practitioners in this area.

### ***Response 3***

Take active steps to make a chance for ability improvement, information transmission: access to the current training on the usage of social media for youth workers and its application in the youth work practice.

### ***4) Barrier: Inadequate and a lack of infrastructure***

Deficient connectivity also poses problems in employing the social and digital media within youth services.

### ***Response 4***

IT substructure - tangible assets and well-maintained, fit for purpose equipment (although not necessarily ICT suits) massive potential in the usage of convenient devices

### **5) *Barrier: Ignorance of e-safety***

With a robust value base on young persons in need of protection, many youth workers are unsuccessful to identify young people's truths and avoid the demand to assist young people in e-safety

#### ***Response 5***

A good and positive attitude about the use of sites inspires its value as a youth work tool. In light of concerns about safeguarding and child protection, there was also a strong sense that the service as a whole should play a more proactive role in educating young people about eSafety and responsible use of the sites.

### **6) *Barrier: an absence of policies***

Several youth work organizations have been slow to adopt the social media as a youth work tool due to the often missing governmental strategies and that youth workers have requested more tactical direction in how to use sites to reinforce their youth work. The deficiency of clear strategy in this area has formed inactivity in its growth, obtaining of equipment, valuable discourse on the issue and a lack of idea for growth and progress.

#### ***Response 6***

It was underlined that there needs to be a shifting of mind-sets between some of the policy-makers and funders to embrace the technological world youths are growing up in. There are few well-known methods for doing this but the need to prove the efficiency of social media is fundamental in moving forward with the use of social media in the youth work. Constant investment: a capital budget for ICTs which comprises workforce preparation in the social media and specified funds for the ICT to inspire originations to accept and adopt the ability of this approach to youth work.

### **7) *Barrier: A culture of mistrust***

Youth work illustrates a relationship of shared trust between youths and adults. There are particular risks on the social media which cannot be stopped by previous work with youths. The occurrence of reliable adults with a reputable professional affiliation with young people- able to recognize and address certain risks to specific youths in the social media space- can contribute to making the social media safer. However, there is doubt about social media and anticipation that it will be abused by either practitioner's youths in term of their social usage.

## **Response 7**

Freedom to take measured risks has also been a challenge.

## **Conclusion**

The effect of social media is not simply because of the way they are considered. The ways how they are used and adopted are far more vital in uncovering whether their effect is helpful or harmful. This paper claimed that youth work has an exclusive role. It can extend support and advice youth as they understand the needs to manage and navigate risk in the social media sites. Similarly, it can reinforce them to uncover positive designs of use of the chances opened up by sites and redesign social spaces. This paper also sketches several barriers that may arise for youth workers who use social media. Some of these barriers comprise e-safety, mistrust, unawareness, and no consistent policies and overcoming these barriers to use social media in youth work practice will need collaborative multi-method approaches. Thus, youth practitioners and investigators must involve in collective attempts to overcome barriers to using the social media. To be sure, youth work must intensify the attempts to empirically address the numerous serious issues linked to practitioner use and application of social media in the youth work practice.

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