

# The Effects of Social Media and Technology on Relationship Quality

Tangela Alston, Emma Callahan, Stephanie Shirk, and Helen Kiso

Susquehanna University

## Introduction

- Over the last ten years, information communication technologies (ICTs) and social network sites (SNSs) have become a large constituent of Western society in maintaining relationships with family, friends, and colleagues.
- In this investigation we sought to find if there is a pattern between young adults' family relationships and their usage of social media and technology.
- Previous research has shown that ICTs and SNSs have had an impact on creating and maintaining friendships (Liu & Yang, 2016), romantic relationships (Jin & Pena, 2010), and parent-adult child relationships (Schon, 2014) during emerging adulthood.
- Christensen (2009) found that both talking on the phone and sending text messages creates a "connected presence" between the family and the adult child.
- According to Spitze & Trent (2006), females are more likely to communicate with their siblings than males, and their interactions are warmer than those of males.
- Eighty percent of young adults have positive relationships with their parents (Schon, 2014).
- **Hypothesis:**  
We hypothesize that the female young adults will use technology more frequently during the week and therefore have better overall satisfaction with their familial relationships in comparison to males.

## Method

- The participants in this study were undergraduate students from upper and lower level psychology classes. We had 75 total participants (12 men, 63 women).
- The first predictor variable was how often these undergraduates used social media. Extraneous variables like age (18-27) and gender (male, female, non-binary, third-gender, and prefer to self-describe) were also acknowledged.
- The other independent variables were technology:
  1. Cell phone use
  2. Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, etc.)
- The dependent variable in this investigation was how their usage of social media impacted the trust in their familial relationships.

Table 1: Social Media Usage

	Sex						95% CI for Mean Difference		t	df
	Male			Female						
	M	SD	n	M	SD	n				
Use Social media	2.25	1.54	12	3.46	1.01	63	-.190, -.513	-3.46*	73	

Note. Significance shown  $p = .001^*$ .

Table 2: IPPA Trust & Communication

	Sex						95% CI for Mean Difference		t	df
	Male			Female						
	M	SD	n	M	SD	n				
IPPAComm	3.98	.628	12	4.10	7.12	63	-.566, .312	-.574	73	
IPPATrust	4.43	.669	12	4.50	4.86	63	-.393, .257	-.417	73	

## Results

- An independent samples  $t$ -test revealed that Social Media Usage ( $SMUsage$ ) was significantly greater among women ( $M = 3.46, SD = 1.01$ ) than men ( $M = 2.25, SD = 1.54$ ).  $t(73) = -3.46, p = .001$ .
- Based on this finding, it was assumed that women would score higher than men in Communication ( $IPPAComm$ ) and Trust ( $IPPATrust$ ) regarding attachment styles in family relationships.
- The results for  $IPPAComm$  for women were insignificant  $t(73) = -.57, p = .56$ .
- The results for  $IPPATrust$  for women were insignificant  $t(13.30) = .417, p = .67$ .

## Discussion

- Our findings were inconclusive with our hypothesis. While it is clear that women use social media more than men, women do not necessarily have closer relationships with their families as a result of this.
- Previous research has shown that ICTs and SNSs have contributed to the time in which friendships and relationships last in Western societies.
- However, in college students, social media usage did not predict communication ( $IPPAComm$ ) and familial trust ( $IPPATrust$ ).
- Significance may not have been found between gender and familial trust and communication due to the wide array of family members that could have been selected by participants in the study.
  - Participants were able to choose between a parent, grandparent, aunt/uncle, cousin, or sibling.
- **Limitations and future directions:** The limitations of this study included a smaller sample size than anticipated. Due to the study being held in a small room, we could only take ten participants at a time, and at no time did all ten participants show up for the study. The study was also only run over a total of 4 weeks, for one day of the first three weeks and two days the last week. In the future, it is advised that the study be run for a longer amount of time and that more blocks for taking the study be made available to potential participants.
- **Implications:** The implications of this study are limited. Based on these findings we can imply that regardless the amount of social media one uses it does not have a positive or negative impact on the individuals familial relationships during emerging adulthood.

## References

- Christensen, T. (2009). "Connected presence" in distributed family life. *New Media & Society, 11*, 433-451. doi: 10.1177/1461444808101620
- Jin, B., & Pena, J. (2010). Mobile communication in romantic relationships: Mobile phone use, relational uncertainty, love, commitment, and attachment styles. *Communication Reports, 1*, 39-51. doi: 10.1080/08934211003598742
- Liu, D., & Yang, C. (2016). Media niche of electronic communication channels in friendship: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 21*(6), 451-466. doi: 10.1111/jcc4.12175
- Schon, J. (2014). 'Dad doesn't text': Examining how parents use of information communication technologies influences satisfaction among emerging adult children. *Emerging Adulthood, 2*(4), 304-312. doi: 10.1177/2167696814551786
- Spitze, G., & Trent, K. (2006). Gender differences in adult sibling relations in two-child families. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 68*, 977-992. doi:10.1111/j.1741-3737.2006.00308.x

Susquehanna  
UNIVERSITY