The Impact of Social Media on Mental Health

Vardanush Palyan¹
California Southern University, Department of Psychology, Irvine, USA
vvpalyan@gmail.com

Abstract

Introduction: Given the prevalence of social media use, it is vital to understand the impact it plays on mental health. The purpose of this study was to shed light and better understand how frequent social media usage can affect mental health. Particularly, this study focused on the frequent usage of social media and its relevance to depression. Methods: A web-based survey gathered data from a total of 200 participants who met the following criteria: 18 and over, residing in California, in a relationship, and current social media user. Results: Individuals with increased levels of social media usage were shown to have a positive correlation with depression symptoms, meaning as social media use increased, depression symptoms also increased. Conclusions: This study showed that social media use has the potential to affect individuals’ mental health.
Keywords: depression, mental health, social media

Introduction

Of 7.5 billion people on the planet, 4 billion use the internet. About 3.3 billion individuals are active social media users (We Are Social, 2018). Social media and networking sites emerged in the 20th century and since then have been evolving and growing exponentially. Social media can be defined as “forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content” (Read & Ginn, 2015 p. 373).

Social media and networking sites were introduced as an outlet and platform for communication, networking, and for creating and sharing content (Evasiuk, 2010). The first known social media site, Six Degrees, was established in 1997. Two years later, blogging became a popular phenomenon. The early 2000s introduced sites like LinkedIn, MySpace, and YouTube. The year of 2006 brought forth the introduction of the social media platforms including Facebook and Twitter, and these are two of the most popular social networking sites to date. In recent times, Instagram and Snapchat were introduced (Ellison, 2007). Instagram was launched in 2010 and Snapchat emerged in 2011 (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017).

Background of the Problem

The excessive usage of social media has become a growing phenomenon and controversial issue. People have become addicted to the various social media platforms, particularly Facebook (Andreassen,
Torsheim, Brunborg, & Pallesen, 2010). Scientific evidence suggest that heavy usage of social network sites can lead to symptoms of substance-related addictions including: salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, relapse, and problems with behavioral addictions (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017). Former Facebook executive, Chamath Palihapitiya, revealed that Facebook was designed to be addictive. He found that social networking sites like Facebook, Snapchat, WhatsApp, and Twitter psychologically manipulate users with the intent of exploiting behaviors of mass population. In fact, he believes that social media platforms like Facebook are ripping apart society and the social fabric of how society works (CNBC, 2017). Sean Parker, ex-Facebook president, in a recent interview revealed that the process and engineering of Facebook intends to consume as much of the user’s time and conscious attention as possible. He revealed that social networks change user’s relationship with society, with each other, and interferes with productivity. He argued that with social media there is a social validation feedback loop. The goal of Facebook is to exploit vulnerability in the human psychology. He further exposed that likes and comments on a post of a photo is like a dopamine hit, which attributes the users to contribute more content every time (AXIOS, 2017). Users have become habituated to the daily instant gratification of likes and comments. There are over 700 million daily active Instagram users, 2 billion daily active Facebook users, and 255 million daily active Snapchat users (Constine, 2017). Users of these platforms spend an average of 40 minutes daily on Snapchat, an average of 32 minutes on Instagram, and 35 minutes on Facebook (Osman, 2018).
With the emergence and rapid prominence of social media, it is vital to understand the impact it has on active user's mental health and relationships. Individuals are so caught up and amazed with tweets, likes, and shares, that they have overlooked the influence social media has on shaping and reshaping society. They have ignored the addictive aspects of social media usage and its impact on actions, thoughts, confidence, and security (Phoon, 2017). Numerous studies have identified linkages between social media use and negative outcomes such as anxiety, depression, loneliness, compulsive behavior, and narcissism (Strickland, 2014). Researchers found that extensive usage of the Internet was associated with increases in depression and loneliness as well as lower levels of communication within households (Kraut et al., 1998).

Facebook depression, Social Network Site (SNS) Addiction, iDisorder, and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) are terms that researchers are now introducing when describing the consequences of heavy usage of social media. Recent findings have led researchers to coin the term Facebook Depression (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). According to their findings, Facebook Depression arises when users spend excessive amount of time on social media sites, which results in symptoms that mimic depression. Facebook Depression is particularly common among teens and adolescents and as a result they may face further risks such as social isolation as well as self-destructive and aggressive behavior (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). Excessive time spent on social media increases the likelihood and one's risk for depression (Jelenchik, Eickhoff, & Moreno, 2013; Pantic et al., 2012). Some argue that active users are most susceptible to symptoms of
depression as they have greater number of friends online, spend greater amount of time reading updates from a wide pool of friends, and much of the content updates are of bragging nature (Blease, 2015).

Entertainment, passing time, relationship maintenance, and companionship are common motives for social media use, particularly Facebook. Yet, these motivations may be related to Facebook addiction through use that is habitual, excessive, or motivated by a desire for mood alteration. Research examining Facebook addiction suggested that Facebook use can become habitual or excessive, and some addicts use the site to escape from negative moods. Social Network Site (SNS) addiction may not be an addition to the Diagnostic Statistical Manual, but it is common for people who are addicted to social media to experience symptoms similar to substance-related addictions (Ryan, Chester, Reece, & Xenos, 2014). Individuals with SNS Addiction Disorder meet similar criterions as addiction. They neglect their personal life, have a mental preoccupation with social media use, use social media as an escape, use social media for mood modifying experiences, develop tolerance, attempt to conceal addictive behavior, and spend time with individuals who use SNSs excessively (Ryan et al., 2014).

Individuals with SNS addiction express classic addiction symptoms including mood modification, salience, tolerance, withdrawal symptoms, conflict, and relapse. It is common for social media usage to result in changes in one’s emotional state. Users of social media develop behavioral, cognitive, and emotional obsessions with SNS use and this results in tolerance or increased usage of SNS over time. Addictive users face
withdrawal and unpleasant physical and emotional symptoms when they attempt to restrict or stop SNS use. Due to the preoccupation and inability to restrict their social media use, users experience conflict as well as interpersonal and intrapsychic problems. Eventually, addict users of SNS relapse and revert back to excessive use even after being abstinent (Griffiths, 2013).

In 2012, researchers coined the term I-Disorder to define the existing negative relationship between technology usage and psychological health (Rosen, Cheever, & Carrier, 2012). These researchers uncovered in their studies that one or more Facebook variables can lead to narcissism, major depressive disorder, bipolar-mania, dysthymia, antisocial personality disorder and compulsive behavior (Rosen et al., 2012). Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is another social phenomenon exacerbated by social media. FOMO occurs as a result of a blend of inadequacy, anxiety, and irritation that occurs from skimming through social media (Wortham, 2011). Researchers have confirmed the association with FOMO and lower need satisfaction, mood, and life satisfaction. FOMO was also linked to higher levels of social media engagement, distracted driving, and using social media during lectures (Przyblyske, Murayama, DeHaan, & Gladwell, 2013). Some users have given up the importance of their safety due to their fear of missing out on something or someone more interesting and exciting on social media (Grohol, 2013). FOMO is not a new concept and has been around before social media. In fact, throughout history many have been triggered to experience FOMO when they read newspaper society pages, party pictures, and annual holiday letters depicting people at their festive best (Wortham, 2011). FOMO triggers
the same signals in the mind as fear of regret. People often are afraid that they are missing out and have made wrong decisions of how well they spend their time (Ariely, 2009). The fear exacerbates for individuals to constantly connect to social media and compulsively check their accounts. FOMO can be translated as a method of keeping up with social comparison. Users of social media are often exposed to details of their peers’ lives and social activities, which can subsequently lead them to comparing with their own lives. Daily users of social media fall victim to the thought that the lives of their friends are better and that their life is unfair. This tends to lead to lower self-esteem and more negative health outcomes (Zuo, 2014).

Social media not only reshapes the mind, but it also reshapes relationships. Social media creates divides amongst couples and their relationships and this is a huge risk. Active users of social media are constantly connected to social media and disconnected and distracted from reality and their relationships (Kraut et al., 1998). According to Kraut et al. (1998) there is a correlation between extensive internet use and declines in social relationships and isolation. People are social beings and require in person interactions and communication (McDaniel & Coyne, 2016). A study explored the impact of quality communication on relationship satisfaction and found that both the quality and amount of time spent communicating improved satisfaction and intimacy within the relationship. It demonstrated that face-to-face interactions was a preferred method of communication as it improved relationship satisfaction and allowed for the couple to be aware of nonverbal communication elements (Emmers-Sommer, 2004). However, the use of the various social media outlets results in many spending more time
in front of computers and phones, rather than in person socialization. People have become victims to their phones and social media accounts. As a result, active user’s mental health and relationships face detriments. Kuss and Griffiths (2017) confirmed that problems arise when individuals engage in addictive social media use. According to these researchers, excessive usage results in intrapsychic and interpersonal conflicts. Intrapsychic conflicts result in problems within and internally, which may include subjective loss of self. Interpersonal conflicts result in issues in relationships, work settings, and all immediate social environments (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017).

Social media is a major part of interest use. In fact, it has been reported that about 80% of Americans confirmed that they have at least one form of social media account. The average American has a minimum of five social media accounts (Fuller, 2017). Due to social media’s mounting prevalence, excessive usage and addiction to social media have become an area of concern (Bassett, Dickerson, Jordan, & Smith, 2016). Andreassen, Pallesen, and Griffiths (2017) described social media addiction as an excessive and uncontrollable concern about social media, driven by an overwhelming motivation to use social media, and the urge to devote so much time and effort to social media usage, which leads to distress and impairments in vital areas of life. Researchers polled 1,787 adults between the ages of 19 and 32 to examine the effects of social media habits on their moods. These researchers found that frequent social media users were 2.7 times more likely to develop depression than those who did not use social media as much (Chowdhry, 2016). Rosen, Cheever, and Carrier (2012) coined the term iDisorder to describe the negative relationship between internet usage...
and psychological health. In a study with 1,143 college students it was found that major depressive disorder, dysthymia, bipolar-mania, compulsive disorder, narcissism, and antisocial personality disorder were predicted by one or more Facebook usage variables. Few of the variables included general use, number of friends, and use for image management (Rosen et al., 2012).

Countless studies have examined the relationship between internet use and the well-being of individuals, particularly young adults (Meador, 2013). Studies have explored a wide range of risks associated with social media usage including: the impact of excessive time spent online, the impact of social media on body image, and cyber bullying. Studies have shown that social media, especially Facebook use, can affect romantic relationships offline by producing jealousy, insecurity, and addictive behaviors like partner surveillance. Monitoring a partner’s social media account is intrusive and can impact relationships negatively (Elphinston & Noller, 2011). Surveillance of a partner’s social media account may result in mistrust, higher anxiety, and jealousy. Numerous studies also confirmed that as Facebook usage increases, relationship satisfaction diminishes (Marshall, Benjanyan, Di Castro, & Lee, 2012). In fact, Facebook and other social media accounts are blamed for failed relationships and break-ups. A study by Gershon (2011) revealed that participants claimed that Facebook was a cause to their breakup.

Swingle (2016) believes that social media plays a major role in societal shift. She believes that this shift impacts the way society thinks, acts, and interacts as a community. Excessive and unhealthy usage of i-technologies
and social media contribute to subtle and not so subtle changes in human behavior and brain function. It has been reported that children and adolescent’s excessive usage of digital media is now associated with emotional dysregulation, learning disabilities, as well as behavioral and conduct disorders. As for adults, digital media is known to be linked to depression, anxiety, social isolation, marital conflict, sexual dysfunction, disaffected pair bonding, and compromised work performance (Swingle, 2016).

Excessive social media usage has become a societal problem and concern. If social media use can be linked to negative outcomes in mental health and relationships, more attention is required on how to assuage these outcomes. Social media and mental health as well as social media and relationship satisfaction are interwoven, and hence preventive measures should be taken. There should be steps taken on a societal level to help minimize habitual social media usage. Strategic reinforcement strategies are required to reduce the amount of time spent on social media. The solution to this concern is not total abstinence from social media but rather social media usage in moderation. Although this study will not directly benefit those who participate in the study, the findings may influence and bring awareness of the impacts of excessive social media use.

The purpose of this quantitative research study is to examine the association between the frequency of social media use and the impact on mental health on those living in the United States, California. This study attempts to determine the relationship, if any, between use of social media

and mental health with the input of 200 participants. This study explored the questions:

1. What is the relationship between the number of hours of daily social media usage and depression?

To answer these questions, it is required to look for relationships among social media usage, mental health status, and relationship satisfaction. The questions aim to denote the extent to which social media usage, mental health, and relationships, co-relate or co-vary.

**Significance of the Study**

Social media use is dominating people’s lives and attention. Research and evidence suggest that social media usage, particularly heavy use, is linked to depression and various other negative side effects (Rohilla & Kumar, 2015). Some argue that it is changing active user’s brain chemistry and reshaping their relationships. Dr. Siegal, a professor who specializes in psychiatry, revealed that social media physiologically rewires the human brain. He believed that social media is replacing the time for face-to-face interactions and communication (Gmose, 2014).

Social media can serve as an outlet for individuals to develop and begin relationships, but it can also aid in ending relationships. Many report feeling disconnected from friends and family due to the lack of interaction with them in person. Social media affects active user’s romantic relationships and their relationship satisfaction. Research has recently shown that Facebook and SNS can be detrimental to romantic relationships because it increases partner surveillance, jealousy, and compulsive internet usage (Strickland, 2014). Jealousy and partner surveillance can result in partners
not getting along and relationship dissatisfaction, which then can result in users developing physical and mental concerns (Farrugia, 2013).

The researcher in this study examined the relationship between social media and mental health of active users. The researcher explored the negative impacts of social media on mental and psychological well-being and wellness.

**Methods**

For the purpose of this study a quantitative research method was used to investigate the following questions: RQ1. What is the relationship between the number of hours of daily social media usage and depression? Quantitative research design allows for data to be obtained from a larger number of participants and is structured to provide statistical and computational results of data. The most common technique for collecting quantitative data include surveys and questionnaires. Quantitative research approach is better suited for generalizing findings to larger populations and identifying general trends in populations (Evasiuk, 2016).

A quantitative approach is utilized when a researcher converts observations into data for analysis from a neutral objective perspective. Quantitative research can tell you when, where, and how often things happen. Data is gathered in numerical forms which can be assigned to categories or rank orders as well as measured in units of measurements. Most often surveys are utilized for quantitative research. A survey design allows for quantitative description of trends, attitudes, and opinions of populations. Survey designs assist researchers to answer three kinds of questions: descriptive questions, questions about relationships between
variables, and questions about predictive relationships between variable over time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

A descriptive research design is the most appropriate method for analyzing the data in the present study. Descriptive analysis is correlational and examines relationships. It is vital to examine the relationship between social media and mental health as well as social media and relationship satisfaction and jealousy. The descriptive statistics allows to quantitatively summarize data gathered from online surveys and questionnaires (Evasiuk, 2016). Descriptive statistics assist in analyzing quantitative survey responses (Meador, 2013).

**Participation**

This quantitative study examined the impact of social media on mental health. According to a new Pew Research survey, 69% of the U.S. adults have at least one social media account, 88% of U.S. adult users of social media are between the ages of 18-29, 78% are between the ages of 30-49, 64% are between the ages of 50-64, and 37% of users are 65 years of age and older (Pew Research Center, 2018). An estimated 200 participants partook in the study. Participants were required to be current residents of United States, California. California is overpopulated with an estimated 39,536,653 populates. From the 39,536,653 populates about 72.4% are White, about 6.5% Black, 1.6% American Indian, 15.2% Asian, 0.5% Native Hawaiian, 3.9% two or more races, and 39.1% Hispanic or Latino (United States Census Bureau, 2017).

There was no designated or mandatory assigned location for the study. The study took place online at the comfort and discretion of the participant.
Participants were not required to travel or meet the researcher in person. The link to the study was made accessible and shared through email, Facebook, and Instagram. Participants were able to use their phone, laptop, computer, or iPad to access the link to the survey and questionnaires.

Participation in this study required individuals to be at least 18 years old and residents of California. They were also required to be social media users as well as be in a romantic relationship. Subjects were required to specify if they are in an open relationship, dating, engaged, or married. This study was conducted online and links to the surveys and questionnaires were provided via Facebook, Instagram, and email. If participants chose to participate, the link redirected them to SurveyMonkey where they were given an informed consent, brief description of the study, and asked to indicate whether they are 18 years of age. If they consented and met the age criteria, they were then able to complete the survey. Participants answered demographic questions on age, gender, and relationship status. Scales and instruments were used to measure social media use, mental health status, relationship satisfaction, and jealousy.

Instrumentation

This quantitative study utilized online self-report questionnaires and surveys. Online surveys and questionnaires assisted in capturing usage of social media, mental health status and relationship satisfaction. Online surveys are beneficial as they are standardized, and participants can partake when it is convenient for them. This chosen method requires minimal cost and time. Questionnaires and surveys assist in gathering and collecting data from a wide, geographic sample (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).
Participants were presented with the consent form, which required acceptance of conditions to continue. The first several questions of the survey were geared towards demographics, relationship status, and social media usage habits. These included questions on age, residence, relationship status, social media use. Questions such as are you over the age of 18 (yes or no)? Do you reside in United States, California (yes or no)? Are you currently in a relationship (yes or no)? What is your relationship status: casual dating, serious dating, engaged, or married? How long have you been in this relationship? How satisfied are you with your relationship overall? (not at all happy, less happy, neutral, happy, or very happy), Do you have social media? (yes or no), Does your significant other have social media? (yes or no), How many times per week do you use your social media (less than once a week, 1-3 times a week, 4-9 times a week, 10-15 times a week, greater than 15 times a week), how many hours of the day do you use your social media accounts? (less than 30 minutes, between 30 minutes and 1 hour, between 1 hour and 5 hours, between 5 hours and 10 hours, and greater than 10 hours).

The Personal Health Questionnaire Depression Scale (PHQ-8) was utilized to identify and determine respondents with depression. This 8-item scale measures diagnostic and severity of depressive disorders. The respondents were required to specify whether they have been bothered by the following problems for over 2 weeks: little interest or pleasure in doing things, feeling down, depressed, or hopeless, trouble falling or stay asleep, or sleeping too much, feeling tired or having little energy, poor appetite or overeating, feeling bad about yourself, or that you are a failure, or have let
yourself or your family down, trouble concentrating on things, such as reading the newspaper or watching television. The respondents chose from the following scale: not at all, several days, more than half the days, nearly every day (Kroenke & Spitzer, 2002).

The PHQ-8 was followed by a borrowed and modified questionnaire. The questions included the following: have you ever been diagnosed with depression? (yes or no) Have you experienced feelings of sadness as a result of using social media? (yes or no) If yes, how often? At least once daily, 2-5 times a week, 1-7 times a month, less than once a month. Have you ever experienced feelings of isolation as a result of using social media? (yes or no) If yes, how often? At least once daily, 2-5 times a week, 1-7 times a month, less than once a month. Have you ever experienced feelings of low self-esteem as a result of using social media? If yes, how often? At least once daily, 2-5 times a week, 1-7 times a month, less than once a month (Kyrlova, 2017).

This study was approved by the California Southern University Review Board on 10/03/2018.

Results

A total of 253 respondents partook in the survey made available on SurveyMonkey. However, only 200 participants met inclusion criteria (CA resident, 18 and over, in a relationship, and have social media). All 200 (100%) participants were residents of California, over the age of 18, in a relationship, and have social media. Of the total responses, the study included 77 (38.5%) males and 123 (61.5%) females.
Research question one asked, “What is the relationship between the number of hours of daily social media usage and depression?” Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the PHQ-8 Scores. The PHQ-8 items and their mean, median, mode, minimum, maximum, standard deviation (SD), skewness, kurtosis, quartile 1 and 3, and IQR are presented in the table. Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the total computation of the PHQ-8 Scores. Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics of number of hours of social media use for all participants.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of PHQ-8 Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STD DEV</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>2.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurtosis</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>8.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quartile 1</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics of PHQ-8 Combined Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Depression scale</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>24.00</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>4.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Valid N 198

Table 3

*Descriptive Statistics of Number of Hours of Social Media Use for all Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily number of hours of social media use</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Valid N 200
A Pearson Correlation analysis was conducted to examine whether there is a relationship between number hours of social media usage and depression. The Pearson correlation between number of hours of social media use and PHQ-9 is about .22. The results revealed a significant and positive relationship $r(198) = .22$, $p = .002$. The relationship between these variables is positive, which indicates that, more hours of social media usage is associated with increased displays of depressive symptoms. Percentage of variance of depression $r$ squared value is .05. Percentage of variance in depressive symptoms that can be accounted for by mean hours of social media use per day is approximately 5%. See table 4.
Discussion

The research question asked, “What is the relationship between the number of hours of daily social media usage and depression? It was hypothesized that there would be a statistically significant correlation between number of hours of social media and depression. The gathered data showed that most respondents use social media between 1 to 5 hours a day (48%) and greater than 15 times a week (65%). The descriptive statistics of the PHQ-8 combined scores showed a (M=4.72, SD=4.43). Results from a Pearson Correlation test showed a significant and positive relationship between social media use and depressive symptoms. These findings are in line with established empirical findings and previous research. Lin et al. (2016) studied the association between depression and social media use. The study revealed that frequent users of social media had 2.7 times the likelihood of depression. Individuals who spent more time on social media had 1.7 times the risks of depression. Symptoms of depression that arises as a result of excessive social media usage was defined by some researchers as Facebook Depression (O’Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). Excessive social media use was linked to poorer sleep quality, lower self-esteem, and higher levels of depression (Woods & Scott, 2016). Similarly, another study assessed the association between social media use and depression among a nationally representative sample of young adults. The study asserted that individuals with the highest quartile of social media site visits per week had significantly increased odds of depression (Lin et al., 2016).
According to the results, there was a positive relationship between social media usage and depressive. If social media usage is associated with depression, then this can impact the various dimensions of the mental health wellness model as well as positive psychology, PERMA, and flourishing. Depression impacts the six dimensions of wellness as well as the PERMA; as it results in feelings of tiredness or little energy physically, isolation socially, feeling down or hopeless emotionally, inability to connect to God or higher power(s) spiritually, trouble concentrating and feeling incapable intellectually, and inability of contributing environmentally. Individuals will then fall into the illness spectrum from the illness-wellness continuum.

**Limitations**

There are several limitations and delimitations with this study. To begin with, this study specifically used participants who were in a relationship, residing in California, and 18 years of age or older. As a result, 53 of the total 253 respondents were excluded for either not being in a relationship or not living in California. This limits the study to California residents and populations of respondents who are in a relationship. A small sample size of 200 respondents lacks generalizability. Considering this study was correlational, it could only determine if a relationship was present between variables. Correlational studies lack the ability to ascertain the cause of a relationship and which variable has influence over the other. This study utilized self-report survey measures, and this is a limitation. There is no way to verify the accuracy or the honesty of the respondent’s answers. Although the survey allowed respondents to be anonymous, there
can still be the possibility of respondents reporting false or inaccurate answers.

**Conclusion**

The intent of this study was to gain a better understanding of the impact and the role social media plays in the shaping of mental health of those living in California. The study did find a correlation between social media use and depression. Analysis of the results showed that social media use has the potential to affect individuals’ mental health. In fact, this study indicated that a link between increased usage of social media and depression exists. In other words, use of social media was positively associated with depressive symptoms. Considering that individuals have become tied to their phones, constantly checking alerts and scrolling through social media, it’s vital that they learn of the various aftereffects of social media use. People of all walks of life should be cognizant and mindful of practicing proper and healthy usage of social media. After all, the frequency, duration, and intensity of social media use can have consequences on an individual level, relationship level, and societal level. It is not only important for researchers, clinicians, and those in the field of mental health to recognize the detriments of social media use but for them to also raise awareness. In fact, the research findings can help clinicians determine whether assessments for depression should include the possibility of social media usage as a contributing factor to the client’s symptoms. This research can raise awareness of the importance of using social media in moderation and can help implement early intervention and prevention for the symptomatology of depression associated with social media use. It is recommended that future researchers continue to conduct
periodic studies assessing the impact social media has on its users. Further studies are required to confirm that users of social media should take precautionary measures and learn how to limit their usage of social media. This study should also unbolt discussions and further research on treatments, self-help techniques, motivational strategies to enhance motivation for users of social media to change their frequent social media usage and abate the depressive symptoms associated with social media. It is important to ensure that the 3 billion social media users maintain and improve their mental health.

**Conflict of Interest to Declare**
The authors have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

**Statement of Funding**
This study was not supported by any funding.

**References**


Chaudry, A. (2016). Research links heavy Facebook and social media usage to depression.

Chou, H. T. G., & Edge, N. (2012). “They are happier and having better lives than I am”: the impact of using Facebook on perceptions of others' lives. Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking, 15(2), 117-121.

CNBC. (2017). Former Facebook Executive Chamath Palihapitiya on Social Media. [Video File] retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5zyRpq2ODrE


https://techcrunch.com/2017/06/27/facebook-2-billion-users/


Evasiuk, A. (2016). *The impact of Facebook use on romantic relationships offline* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Lethbridge (Canada)).


Pavlíček, A. (2013). Social Media—the Good, the Bad, the Ugly. IDIMT-2013, 139.


Swingle, M. (2016). *i-Minds: How cell phones, computers, gaming, and social media are changing our brains, our behavior, and the evolution of our species.* New Society


Turkle, S. (2017). *Alone together: Why we expect more from technology and less from each other.* Hachette UK.

Twenge, J. M. (2013). Does online social media lead to social connection or social disconnection? *Journal of College and Character, 14*(1), 11-20.


