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Original Research

Social Media And Relationship Dynamics, Exploring The Impact Of Usage Patterns On Trust Jealousy And Overall Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT:

Social media use is a ubiquitous phenomenon. Research shows that 90% of adults own a smartphone. Due to the prevalence of social media in our lives, the people of the world are more interconnected than at any other time in history. Because of this, there could be a perception that people are happier because they are connected with more people. Overindulging in social media also leads to decreased relationship quality with others, including close relationships, by increasing the potential for distrust, relationship dissatisfaction, emotional detachment, isolation, fewer offline interactions, a skewed perception of reality, and in rare cases the ending of a relationship.

Key words: Social Media, Dynamics, Jealousy

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INTRODUCTION

Social media has recently become part of people's daily activities; many of them spend hours each day on Messenger, Instagram, Facebook, and other popular social media. Thus, many researchers and scholars study the impact of social media and applications on various aspects of people's lives. Moreover, the number of social media users worldwide in 2019 is 3.484 billion, up 9% year-on-year. A statistic shows the gender distribution of social media audiences worldwide as of January 2020, sorted by platform. It was found that only 38% of Twitter users were male but 61% were using Snapchat. In contrast, females were more likely to use LinkedIn and Facebook. There is no denying that social media has now become an important part of many people's lives. Social media has many positive and enjoyable benefits, but it can also lead to mental health problems. Previous research found that age did not have an effect but gender did; females were much more likely to experience mental health than males.¹⁻⁴

Benefits and Patterns of Social Media Use: The Uses and Gratifications Theory on social media use

suggest people use social media to fulfill their needs and motivation for gratification. According to this theory, one major motivator for use and gratification is to connect with others online efficiently, selectively, and meaningfully, in order to fulfill their social needs and approval. There are a plethora of social media platforms that help individuals form their social capital, and their social media use is largely dictated by this process. Given the importance of social connection in the survival of human beings, social media has been noted as an important tool for social bonding and network building. For example, studies have found that online-mediated social connections promoted benefits and well-being among cybervictims and buffered anxiety and isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic.⁵ In fact, research has identified a range of social, developmental, and emotional benefits associated with social media use. A recent study by the Pew Research Center on teenagers' habits and experiences of using social media indicated that a majority felt more connected to their friends, interacted with a more diverse group of people, and felt supported when they used social media. Gender Minority groups (e.g., lesbians, gay,

bisexual, and transgender youth) may particularly benefit from the use of social media and other online resources that provide information, support, and feelings of meaningfulness, as well as those social media outlets that may assist in identity development and civic connectedness. Additionally, researchers have noted the potential of social media platforms to provide a prompt for reminiscence and increased meaning in life and have demonstrated how deeper engagement with personal social media content can facilitate connections with others, enhance self-knowledge, and increase a sense of connection between present and past selves. Research with young adults in Australia identified “Facebook connectedness” to be distinct from other forms of social connectedness, and to be significantly associated with lower depression and anxiety and greater life satisfaction.⁶⁻⁹

Social media and jealousy: Jealousy is often confused with envy, which is characterized by a desire for the possessions, achievements, or qualities of another individual. Other related emotions typically examined in the literature on jealousy are disgust, hurt, and anger. Depending on the context that invokes a jealous response, these related emotions may or may not show similar patterns of results as jealousy. SNSs are a type of social media – broadly defined as “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system”. “Social media” is often used synonymously with social networking or SNS. Because much of the research on romantic jealousy has focused on sites like Facebook, we will use the term “social networking site” or “SNS” throughout the chapter. While the specifics of the various SNSs vary by time, culture, purpose (LinkedIn vs. FB), and population, they all have the above characteristics. Current research indicates that while 73% of all people online use social media, young adults are the most prevalent users – 90% of this age group is online in the Western world.¹⁰⁻¹³

Sociodemographic differences: The extant literature presents evidence of demographic differences in the evaluation of social media content; the use of SMP information for relationship initiation; and the subsequently evoked negative emotions, such as jealousy. Prior research has examined the influence of gender, age and culture on an individual's experience of SoMJ. Sociodemographic factors present an interesting area of inquiry because they can potentially influence the mechanisms through which SoMJ may develop or increase in intensity. The divergence in prior knowledge on SoMJ is especially evident in terms of gender-based differences. Studies conducted by previous authors suggest that there is a

distinct difference in the effect of social media cues on male and female experiences of jealousy. Similarly, another author discusses that gender differences may exist with regard to the type of jealousy experienced – that is, emotional or sexual – due to social media-associated cues but found none in terms of the level of jealousy experienced. This finding partially supports the additional research that found that males may show a higher response toward perceived sexual jealousy. In contrast, higher jealousy levels are evoked in women who perceive emotional infidelity in their partners' social media activities. Similarly, gender differences have been posited in terms of the intensity of experienced jealousy, type of negative emotion felt by women vis-à-vis men, and behavioral response to the experienced emotion, for example—partner monitoring. The literature reviewed for the SLR also suggests that age, stage of individual development, level of immersive exposure to social media communication patterns, and norms may create individual differences in SMP use. This may, in turn, affect the determination of the threshold criteria for determining the perception of cyber abuse, social media surveillance, or partner monitoring.¹⁴⁻¹⁷

Social network sites (SNS) use and relationship happiness: Prior research on Facebook use and romantic relationships has focused on the negative effects, but there is evidence that SNS use can strengthen the relationships with friends and acquaintances. These studies found that SNS are especially useful for maintaining bridging capital, that is, weaker ties with acquaintances. However, there were also positive effects on bonding capital, strong ties with close friends. Therefore, we think that SNS use can also strengthen romantic relationships.¹⁹ SNS can be used to display signs of commitment, for example, when a new partner sets the relationship status to ‘in a relationship.’ Mod (2010) found that changing the relationship status is a major step in a relationship and can also alter dynamics in the offline relationship. Mod (2010) also found that people publicly display their affection on SNS and that partners value these public signs of affection. These findings are based on interviews with 11 SNS users.¹⁹

CONCLUSION

Excessive social media use leads to decreased emotional well-being by triggering an increased response to negative emotions such as FOMO, depression, loneliness, anxiety, social comparison, decreased life satisfaction, anger, wasting time, frustration, increased isolation and a slew of others. Overindulging in social media also leads to decreased relationship quality with others, including close relationships, by increasing the potential for distrust, relationship dissatisfaction, emotional detachment, isolation, fewer offline interactions, a skewed perception of reality, and in rare cases the ending of a relationship.

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