

# Pings of Power

The Effects of Social  
Media on Personal and  
Relationship Wellness

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# Introductions



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# The Original Plan



# Methodology



## Literature Search Strategy

Search Terms: "social media," "influence," "effect," "mental health," "depression," "anxiety," "mental illness," "wellness," "distress," "baby boomers," "Gen\* X," "Gen\* Y," "Gen \*Z," "millennials,"

Search Engines: GCU Library, Walden University Library, Google Scholar, Elicit, PsychInfo, EBSCO Host



## Selection criteria

Narrowed our search to articles published since 2014 (10 years, though more than half were published within the last 5 years).

Included articles that were both cross-sectional, correlational studies and literature reviews of prior research.

Ended with 55 articles that met the selection criteria



Thematic Analysis—Used a qualitative method to review the articles to find themes, which we will discuss today.



## Early Research

- Research into the effect of technology assisted communication is almost as old as the internet.
  - Sanders et al., 2000
  - Bargh & McKenna, 2004
- Earliest research began to understand that internet usage mental- or relationship health were not easily associated, particularly in any kind of causal relationship.



## Mixed Results

- The results of prior research are mixed with very few researchers finding strong correlations between social media use and mental and relational health.
- The vast majority found only weak associations or found no correlations at all.
  - Keles, McCrae, & Grealish, 2020
  - Valdez, Ten Thij, Bathina, Rutter, & Bollen, 2020
  - Valkenburg, 2022

# Of Special Note

- There were few operational definitions
  - “Time spent” was not clearly defined, and researchers looked at ranges from 15 minutes to 8 hours without any specific data about time spent.
  - Content engaged was not clearly defined.
  - The media was not clearly defined:
    - Researchers looked at “Social media” or “electronic messaging” without defining a specific social media platform or electronic messaging medium
    - Researchers looked at “use,” “engagement,” and “activity” without defining active/passive use or the content engaged
  - “Wellness,” “emotional health,” and “relationship health” were not clearly defined





# Themes that Emerged: DISPOSITIONS, NOT DEMOGRAPHICS

- Dispositional, not Demographic, Factors Drive Social Media Use
  - 17 articles referenced the importance that individual's dispositions, rather than demographic, group identity, played in how individuals interacted with social media and the effect social media would have on them:
    - Nesi & Prinstein, 2015
    - Baker & Carreno, 2016
    - Reissmann, Hauser, Stollberg, Kaunzinger, & Lange, 2018
    - Faelens, Hoorelbeke, Soenens, Van Gaeveren, De Marez, De Raedt, & Koster, 2021
    - Vaterlaus, Aylward, Tarabochia, & Martin, 2021
    - Hartman & Quick, 2023



# Themes that Emerged: CONTENT ENGAGED

- Content Engaged

- 17 articles emphasized that the content with which one engages is a primary factor on how social media effects one's mental and relationship well-being.
- Two subcategories were identified in relation to the content engaged, Type of Content Engaged and How One Engages with the Content (active or passive).

- Type of Content

- Xie, 2014
- Chopik, 2016
- Armstrong & Mahone, 2017
- Van Ouytsel, Ponnet, & Walrave, 2018
- Sheldon, Antony, & Ware, 2021
- Chen, Wood, Ysseldyk, 2022
- Carrillo-Durán, Ruano-López, Fernández-Falero, & Trabadela-Robles, 2022
- Sharma & Veer Singh, 2024

- How One Engages with the Content (active or passive)

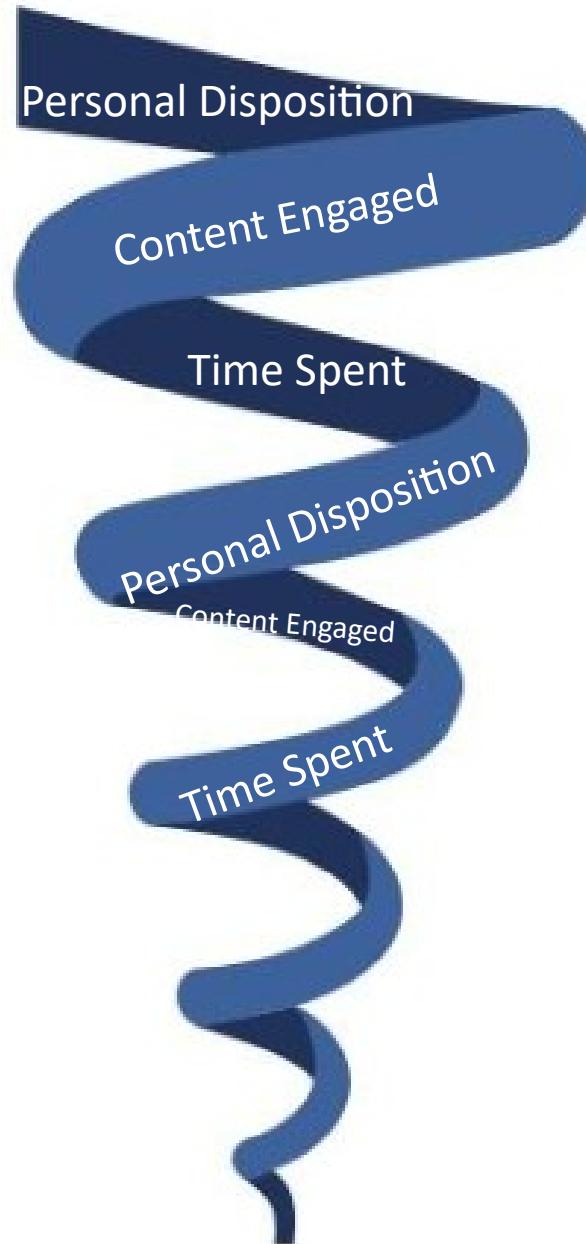
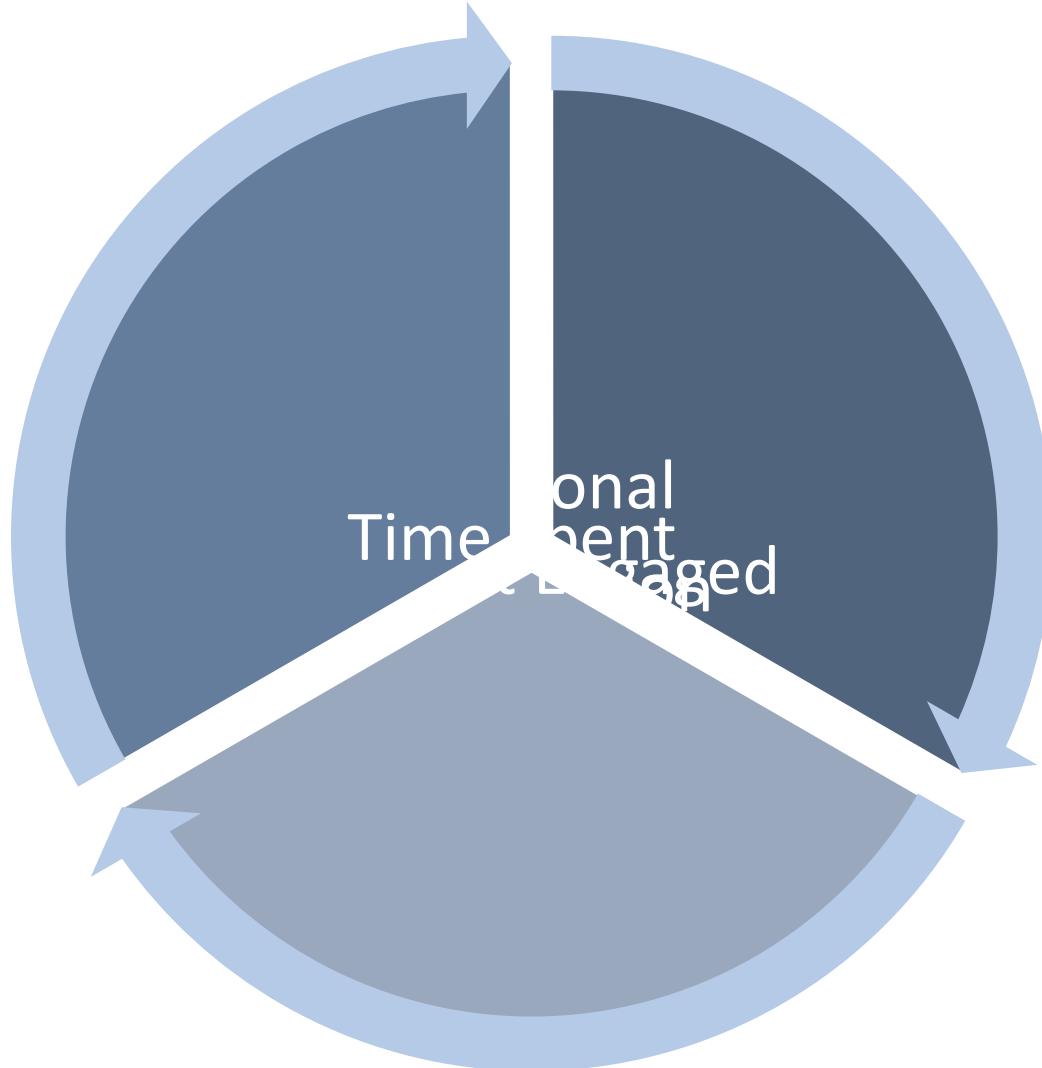
- Abi-Jaoude, Naylor, & Pignatiello, 2020
- Van Der Wal, Valkenburg, & Van Driel, 2024
- Valkenburg, Beyens, Meier, & Vanden Abeele, 2022



## Themes that Emerged: TIME SPENT

- 8 articles focused on time spent on technology assisted communication and social media use's relationship to mental and relationship health.
- Two sub-themes emerged, how much time is spent on one's devices and when one spends this time on their devices.
  - Time Spent: How Much
    - Murdock, Gorman, & Robbins, 2015
    - Lapierre & Lewis, 2018
    - Wilson, 2018
    - Akbar, Prawesti, & Perbani, 2024
  - Time Spent: When
    - Hales, Dvir, Wesselmann, Kruger, & Finkenauer, 2018
    - Viola, 2021
    - Joshi, 2022

# The Interplay



# Conclusion

- Social media and technology assisted communication is not a monolithic concept but consists of multiple factors that make simple bivariate analyses reductive (Ehimuan et al., 2024)
- Researchers need to do a much better job at operationally defining their research objectives.
- The effects of social media and electronic device usage are not unidirectional in their causation, but rather a consequence of the interplay between an individual's personal dispositions, the content engaged, and the time spent engaging with the content.





# Thank you!

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Questions and Comments

