

Pings of Power

The Effects of Social
Media on Personal and
Relationship Wellness

James M. Smith, PhD, LPC

Chrystala Smith, MEd, LPC

Research Assistants:

Ms. Lynette Mercado, Med

Ms. Aleah Curley, Med, LPC



Introductions



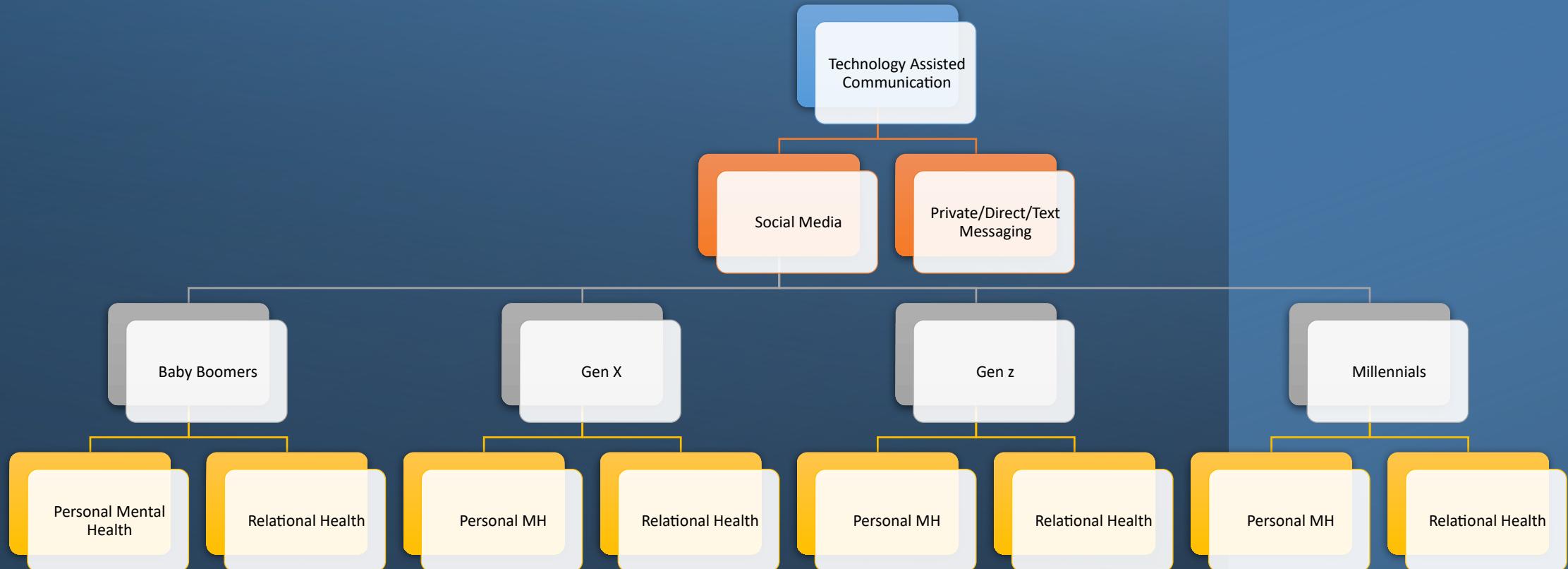
Ms. Chrystala Smith



Dr. James M. Smith

Ms. Lynette Mercado
Ms. Aleah Curley

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

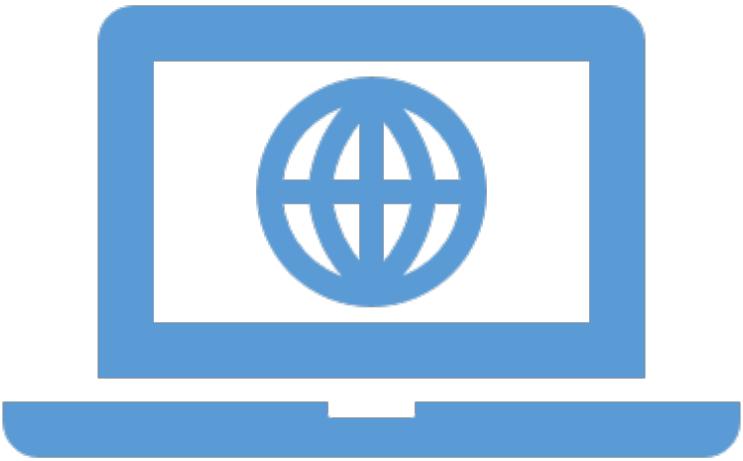
Narrowed our search to articles published since 2014 (10 years, though more than half were published within the last 5 years).

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

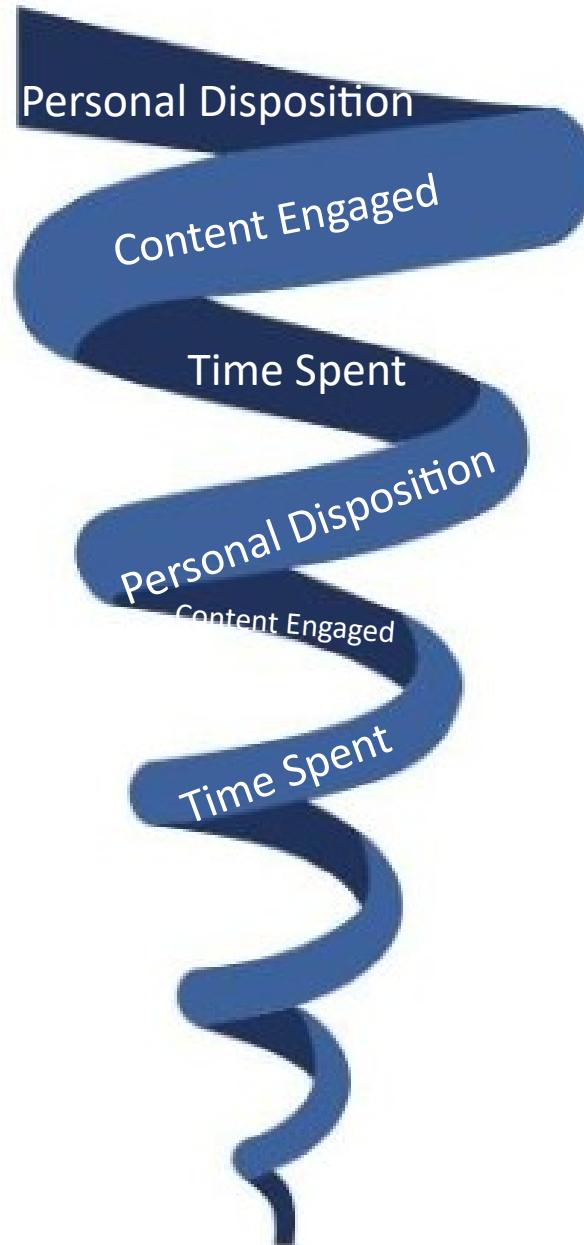
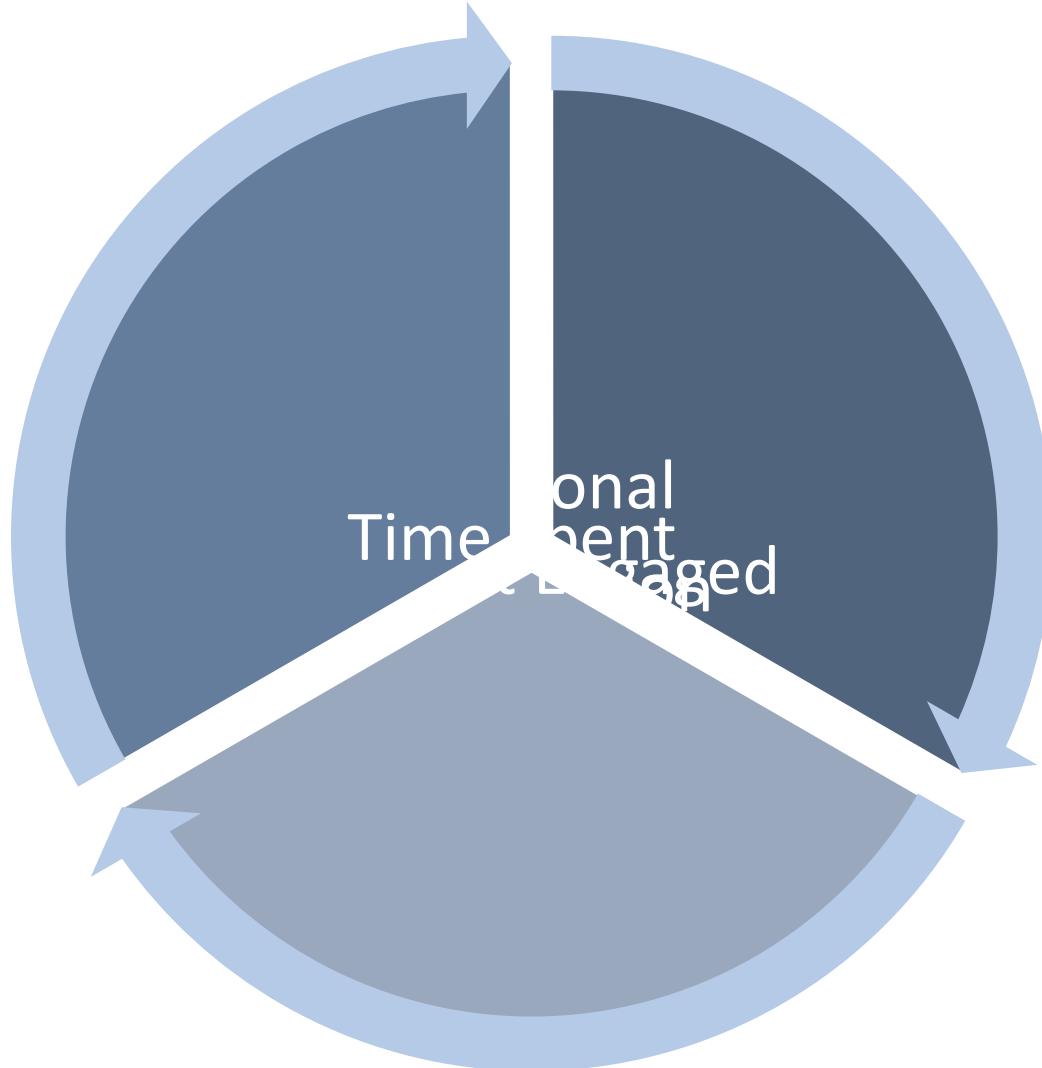
- 17 articles emphasized that the content with which one engages is a primary factor on how social media effects one's mental and relationship well-being.
- Two subcategories were identified in relation to the content engaged, Type of Content Engaged and How One Engages with the Content (active or passive).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

Questions and Comments

