The Role of Social Media in Romantic Relationships: Examining the Association between Active Social Media Use and Relationship Conflict, Stress, and Satisfaction

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THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS: EXAMINING THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN ACTIVE SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND RELATIONSHIP CONFLICT, STRESS, AND SATISFACTION

By

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ABSTRACT

With the evolving normalcy of communication technology in society, more research is required concerning the processes and effects of social media within the context of health and interpersonal outcomes. By examining Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram simultaneously, this research aims to assess which Social Networking Site (SNS) has a stronger association on romantic relationship satisfaction through the mediating role of romantic relationship stress and conflict. Under the framework of the systemic-transactional model of dyadic coping, the study will attempt to identify how active SNS use is associated with romantic relationship stress, conflict, and satisfaction. A total of 227 participants with Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts ages 18 to 39 (M = 20.77, SD = 2.08), predominantly heterosexual (92.1%) Caucasian (78.9%) women (87.2%), completed an online survey questionnaire. Analysis of two mediation models using bootstrapping methods revealed that active SNS use is not associated with romantic relationship conflict and stress and that the relationship between social media sites (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram) and romantic relationship satisfaction is not mediated by romantic relationship stress or conflict. The theoretical and practical implications of these findings are discussed in detail.
As the pervasiveness of social media rises in society, research regarding this subject and its negative effects has become increasingly significant. The emergence of social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, as well as the way in which romantic relationships function has been greatly affected (Clayton, Nagurney, & Smith, 2013; Clayton, 2014; Fox & Moreland, 2015; Frampton & Fox, 2018; Yacoub, Spoede, Cutting, & Hawley, 2018). Researching Social Networking Sites (heretofore: SNSs) has provided a new platform for communication and has significantly influenced the dynamics of relationships (Clayton et al., 2013; Clayton, 2014; Ridgway & Clayton, 2016; Stewart & Clayton, 2020). New relationships are created daily, and the interpersonal factors of these relationships are continuously changing and being impacted by various external factors (Fox & Rooney, 2015; McLean, Paxton, Wertheim, & Masters, 2015; Ridgway & Clayton, 2016; Stewart & Clayton, 2020). SNSs, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, have provided a relatively new platform for both personal and impersonal communication. With the affordance of SNSs in everyday life (Fox & Moreland, 2015; Stewart & Clayton, 2020), new phenomena have emerged, such as trust issues and jealousy due, in part, to online dating exclusivity, easy access to information, and easy access to new and past relationships (Elphinston & Noller, 2011; Frampton & Fox, 2018; McDaniel, Drouin, & Cravens, 2016; Yacoub et al., 2018). Other related studies have examined how detrimental SNS-induced jealousy can affect romantic relationships (Frampton & Fox, 2018; Muise, Christofides, & Desmarais, 2009; Utz & Beukeboom, 2011). Generally, these studies have demonstrated that increased SNS use is associated with negative romantic relationship
outcomes (Clayton et al., 2013; Clayton, 2014; Ridgway & Clayton, 2016; Stewart & Clayton, 2020; Fox & Moreland, 2015; Frampton & Fox, 2018; McLean et al., 2015).

Recent research has also shown that social media usage, in general, whether Facebook (Clayton et al., 2013), Twitter (Clayton, 2014), or Instagram (Ridgway & Clayton, 2016; Stewart & Clayton, 2020) is associated with increased SNS-related relationship conflict (e.g., arguments, jealousy, etc.). However, existing research has yet to investigate three SNSs simultaneously in the prediction of relationship conflict, stress, and satisfaction. Additionally, research in the realm of SNS use and romantic relationships has yet to test the systemic-transactional model of dyadic coping, especially in the context of relationship conflict, stress, and satisfaction. Therefore, this study is guided by the systemic-transactional model of dyadic coping to examine whether active Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram usage is associated with romantic relationship conflict and stress. Furthermore, this study seeks to understand which SNS has a stronger association on romantic relationship satisfaction through the mediating variables of romantic relationship conflict and stress.

The following four sections of the literature review provide an overview of each SNS being studied (2.1), SNSs’ effects on romantic relationship conflict and stress (2.2), SNSs’ effects on romantic relationship satisfaction (2.3), the systemic-transactional model of dyadic coping and the role of communication technologies in romantic relationships (2.4), and the current study’s hypotheses and research questions (2.5).
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Overview of Social Networking Sites

Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are the three most popular social networking sites (Statista, 2019). According to Vogels (2019), millennials are the heaviest adopters and users of social media. As for Generation Z, this population was born into and has grown up with prevalent communication technology and does not know life without it—an element that has become an integral part of their everyday lives and a defining common characteristic of this generational group (Alhabash & Ma, 2017; Anderson & Jiang, 2018). 95% of teenagers have access to a smartphone, and a similar share (97%) use at least one major online platform (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). Generation Z engage via social media for an array of reasons, including communication with family and friends, information seeking, and interpersonal relationship maintenance (Alhabash & Ma, 2017; Anderson & Jiang, 2018). Teenage Internet users report being most active on YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, and Twitter accordingly (Statista, 2020). However, the current study is only examining the three identified SNSs for two reasons: (1) the functions of Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are relatively similar in terms of active use (i.e., posting updates, liking and commenting, scrolling the timeline), and (2) most related studies (Alhabash & Ma, 2017; Chen, 2011; Clayton et al., 2013; Clayton, 2014; Fox & Moreland, 2015; González-Rivera & Hernández-Gato, 2019; Muise et al., 2009; Muise, Christofides, & Desmarais, 2014; Ridgway & Clayton, 2016; Robards & Lincoln, 2016; Saslow, Muise, Impett, & Dubin, 2013; Stewart & Clayton, 2020) have investigated the same three SNSs. The current study examines whether active SNS use is associated with
relationship conflict, stress, and satisfaction; thus, an overview of each SNS—Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram—is first discussed.

2.1.1. Facebook

Facebook is the most popular SNS in the United States (Statista, 2019). The company’s mission is “to give people the power to build community and bring the world closer together” (Facebook, 2020). Facebook allows its users to connect with family members, friends, acquaintances, and even strangers and incorporates the feature to post and share content, such as status updates, photos, and videos (Forsey, 2020). Although Facebook was founded in 2004, the social media platform continues to grow with over 1.82 billion daily active users and over 2.7 billion monthly active users—all of which is primarily accessed via mobile devices (Facebook, 2020). 79% of Internet users report having a Facebook account and mobile application, and 76% of Americans with Facebook accounts report accessing the platform daily, further emphasizing the routine nature of Facebook use (Greenwood, Perrin, & Duggan, 2016). Although the majority of online young adults (18-29 years old), older adults are joining the platform at increasing rates—65% of those 65 and older now use Facebook (Greenwood et al., 2016; Perrin & Anderson, 2019).

2.1.2. Twitter

Per the company’s website, Twitter is categorized as a popular microblogging service that allows users to interact via 140-character messages, termed tweets, to a population of listeners, characterized as followers (Twitter, 2020). Users can also communicate using replies, mentions, quote tweets, and hashtags (Forsey, 2020). Despite recent reports of a declining relevance of the platform, (Kastrenakes, 2019; Leetaru, 2019), Twitter reported a 26% growth of daily active users from 2019 (Wagner, 2021). About one-quarter of adult Internet users report
using Twitter, a value that is statistically unchanged from the Pew Research Center’s last survey conducted in 2015 (Greenwood et al., 2016). In the past, data pertaining to the number of Twitter users have faced harsh criticism, as Twitter has overestimated their number of users before by including inactive and spam accounts (Picchi, 2017). However, Twitter recently announced that the site has 145 million daily active users and 330 million monthly active users (Twitter, 2020).

2.1.3. Instagram

Unique to other platforms, Instagram is predominantly mobile application that enables photo-sharing and allows its users to edit or filter photos and videos, and then share them directly on the platform itself, as well as on other platforms like Facebook and Twitter (Forsey, 2020). Last year Instagram reported having over 1 billion active monthly users (Instagram, 2020). Users can upload photos and videos to a streaming feature, labeled Stories, where the content is available for others to view for 24 hours before it disappears. In January 2019, the company reported an average of 500 million daily active Instagram Stories users (Clement, 2020). Fifty-nine percent of online young adults (18-29 years old) report using Instagram—thus, making them the largest age group of Instagram users (Alhabash & Ma, 2017; Greenwood et al., 2016).

2.2. SNSs’ Effects on Romantic Relationship Conflict and Stress

With the rise of new technology and increasing complexity of interpersonal communication, SNSs have altered their range of influence, now adapting relationships to be predominantly accessed online (Alhabash & Ma, 2017; Clayton, Nagurney, & Smith, 2013; Clayton, 2014; Fox & Moreland, 2015; Frampton & Fox, 2018; Yacoub et al., 2018). The impressive technological developments and increasing popularity of SNSs have provided researchers with an opportunity to explore and better understand the various forms of computer-mediated communication (Alhabash & Ma, 2017; Fox & Rooney, 2015; González-Rivera &
Hernández-Gato, 2019; McLean et al., 2015). As a result, many studies have been conducted to investigate the complex interactions between SNS use and relationship conflict and stress. Although SNSs may be helpful to keep in touch with family and friends, there is research showing that increased SNS use can be detrimental to romantic relationships.

In an early study, Clayton et al. (2013) demonstrated that Facebook use predicted negative relationship outcomes (i.e., cheating, breakup, and divorce), through Facebook-related conflict, as a mediator variable, which was further moderated by relationship length. That is, Facebook usage predicted negative relationship outcomes, particularly when there was conflict related to this increased usage, but only among those who had been in short-term relationships thus far (i.e., for three years or less). Additionally, Clayton (2014) found similar results with another SNS—Twitter. Increased usage was associated with the same negative relationship outcomes and was mediated by Twitter-related conflict (Clayton, 2014). However, in this particular study, relationship length did not moderate the indirect effect of Twitter usage on negative relationship outcomes. Regardless of how long the couple had been dating, those who used Twitter more frequently were more likely to have Twitter-related conflict—thus, predicting negative relationship outcomes (Clayton, 2014).

Next, Ridgway and Clayton (2016) extended this SNS-related investigation to Instagram and found that body satisfaction predicted increased selfie posting, which was positively associated with Instagram-related conflict. Instagram-related conflict then predicted increased negative relationship outcomes. However, one variable that was outside the scope of the Ridgway & Clayton (2016) study was photo manipulation behaviors. Thus, Stewart and Clayton (2020) recently found that Instagram-related conflict was positively related to a romantic partners’ Instagram usage when a romantic partner engages not just in Instagram posting more
broadly (Ridgway & Clayton, 2016), but in the posting of photo-manipulated images on Instagram more specifically.

Aside from relationship conflict and negative relationship outcomes, new phenomena in relation to relationship stress have emerged, such as jealousy and trust issues due to online dating exclusivity, easy access to information, and easy access to new and past relationships (Elphinston & Noller, 2011; Frampton & Fox, 2018; McDaniel et al., 2016; Yacoub et al., 2018). It is unsurprising that related studies (see e.g., Frampton & Fox, 2018; Robards & Lincoln, 2016) have revealed that SNSs are commonly operated to monitor current romantic partners as well as ex-partners. Since SNSs can feature both self-generated and friend- or follower-generated information via posting, tagging, and sharing, there is a vast array of personal information conveniently compounded into one public and readily accessible application.

However, this broad spectrum of available information may yield relationship conflict. It is possible that this level of information visibility may stir up jealousy among partners in relationships. Indeed, higher levels of active Facebook use predict greater jealousy (Clayton et al., 2013; Elphinston & Noller, 2011; Frampton & Fox, 2018; González-Rivera & Hernández-Gato, 2019; Muise et al., 2009; Muise et al., 2014) and dissatisfaction (Elphinston & Noller, 2011; Fox & Moreland, 2015) in romantic relationships. Related studies have found that the specific content on a partner’s SNS account has the potential to induce stressful emotions (e.g., arguments, jealousy, etc.), especially in women (Utz & Beukeboom, 2011; Frampton & Fox, 2018; Muise et al., 2009; Muise et al., 2014). SNSs can often serve as a window to one’s past, so it is possible that the available information on a partner’s SNS account could trigger jealousy regarding past events (Frampton & Fox, 2018). For instance, Robards and Lincoln (2016) highlighted one participant who felt angry and uncomfortable after looking at his partner’s
Facebook profile and seeing photos of her previous relationship. This type of information seeking can potentially lead to finding very old and dated content, as information posted on SNSs will remain visible until deleted or privatized by the account owner (Frampton & Fox, 2018).

2.3. SNSs’ Effects on Romantic Relationship Satisfaction

It can be suggested that the rise in social media usage results in the rise of violations of fidelity and decreased trust and relationship satisfaction (Clayton, 2014; Elphinston & Noller, 2011; Norton & Baptist, 2014; Yacoub et al., 2018), albeit the findings of previous studies on the associations of SNS use with relationship outcomes can be inconsistent (see Ferguson, 2013). For instance, in some seminal studies, Facebook use was associated with conflict (Clayton et al., 2013) and jealousy (Muise et al., 2009; Utz & Beukeboom, 2011), whereas other studies found that high Facebook use was associated with relationship satisfaction (Billedo, Kerkhof, & Finkenauer, 2020; Saslow et al., 2013). One explanation for the lack of consistency among these related studies may be due, in part, to the trouble of identifying the many different social functions on SNSs (e.g., timeline scrolling, network messaging, partner surveillance, checking upcoming events) (Billedo, Kerkhof, & Finkenauer, 2015; Billedo et al., 2020; Frampton & Fox, 2018; Muise et al., 2009; Muise et al., 2014; Utz & Beukeboom, 2011).

Further studies conducted by Norton, Baptist, and Hogan (2018) and Clayton (2014) investigated the associations between SNS usage and feelings of trust and fidelity in romantic relationships. Guided by the actor-partner interdependence model (APIM), Norton et al. (2018) analyzed data from 6,756 couples and measured acceptability for online boundary crossing, partner intrusion, relationship satisfaction, and partner responsiveness. Results indicated that acceptability for online boundary crossing was associated with decreased relationship
satisfaction for both men and women (Norton et al., 2018). That is, both cis genders feel less satisfied in their romantic relationship when their partner is using an SNS to communicate with someone attractive. Next, Clayton (2014) recruited 581 Twitter users to explore the relationship between active Twitter use and length of relationship. The researcher administered an online questionnaire inquiring about common problems that arise with romantic partners through Twitter use (e.g., conflict, infidelity, and cheating). Clayton (2014) found that active Twitter users came across more conflict with romantic partners and that Twitter-related conflict is associated with increased infidelity, breakup, or divorce. Due to the conflicting nature of these findings, it is evident that more research is needed to better understand how SNS usage is associated with relationship satisfaction.

2.4. Theoretical Framework: The Systemic-Transactional Model of Dyadic Coping

One framework that might explain the findings reviewed insofar is the systemic transactional model of dyadic coping (Bodenmann, 1995; Revenson, Kayser, & Bodenmann, 2005). Within this framework, romantic relationships are defined as an honest and voluntary union between two adult individuals who share a long-term common existence; strong feelings for the other are generated over the course of this personal commitment, as well as the development of intense thoughts of dependence, intimacy, and mutuality (González-Rivera & Hernández-Gato, 2019; Kammrath & Dweck, 2006; Revenson et al., 2005). These parameters also include all couples, regardless of sexual orientation, in addition to married and unmarried couples, and, also, cohabiting couple and couples that are not living together. Furthermore, under this model, conflict is can be defined as social occurrence where disagreements, incompatibilities, and hostilities may establish an overwhelming presence among individuals or
couples. Individual responses to conflict and coping styles for stress can have severe implications for the future of the relationship (Kammrath & Dweck, 2006; Revenson et al., 2005).

The systemic-transactional model of dyadic coping is one of many theoretical models that examine stress in romantic relationships (Bodenmann, 1995; Revenson et al., 2005). The current model was developed to understand the impact of the effect of daily stress in relationship functioning (e.g., communication and well-being) and how those mediators are associated with romantic relationship satisfaction and the probability of negative outcomes (i.e., breakup or divorce) (Bodenmann, 1995; González-Rivera & Hernández-Gato, 2019; Revenson et al., 2005). The model assumes that everyday stressors have an impact on relationship functioning and can trigger dissatisfaction—thus, deteriorating the quality of the couple. More specifically, the following describes the four mediating processes by which the current model proposes that stress will impact the quality of the relationship: (a) decreasing shared time together, considerably affecting their self-disclosure and general intimacy; (b) decreasing the quality of communication by producing less positive interaction and more withdrawal; (c) increasing the risk of physical and psychological problems (e.g., trouble sleeping, mood disorders); and, finally, (d) increasing the likelihood that most problematic traits will be expressed between partners (e.g., rigidity, hostility) (Bodenmann, Ledermann, and Bradbury, 2007; González-Rivera & Hernández-Gato, 2019). Furthermore, the less partners talk about their private needs, interests, and experiences, the likelihood of distance, and potentially separation, increases along with the presence of more conflict (Revenson et al., 2005; Bodenmann et al., 2007).

The rise in communication technologies has allowed for SNS usage to become one of the primary stressors in romantic relationships, as reviewed above. Several studies have been consistent in demonstrating that the distraction of SNSs in romantic relationships can produce
interpersonal conflict and relationship dissolution (Clayton et al., 2013; Clayton, 2014; Ridgway & Clayton, 2016; Stewart & Clayton, 2020; McDaniel et al., 2016).

Given that increased SNS use is associated with romantic relationship conflict (Clayton et al., 2013; Clayto, 2014; McDaniel et al., 2016; Ridgway & Clayton, 2016; Stewart & Clayton, 2020), which would be a clear stressor in a user’s romantic relationship, then it is likely that increased stress as indicated by self-reported romantic relationship conflict might be associated with greater probability of relationship dissolution, per the systemic-transactional model of dyadic coping (Bodenmann, 1995). However, this is not evidence to indicate which SNS might be the strongest predictor in terms of usage and increased relationship conflict. Thus, while each SNS is predicted to be associated with relationship conflict, per the literature reviewed thus far, the question of which SNS predicts decreased relationship satisfaction through relationship conflict is of interest to this study.

2.5. The Current Study

The current research study hopes to add to the body of literature pertaining to the effects of SNS use on relationship conflict and stress by examining three SNSs simultaneously in the prediction of relationship conflict, stress, and satisfaction. Relationship conflict is conceptualized following Clayton et al. (2013) as whether SNS use facilitates relationship complications, such as verbal arguments, jealousy, etc. (Clayton et al., 2013; Ridgway & Clayton, 2016). As a result, the researcher predicts that posting on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram will be positively associated with romantic relationship stress and romantic relationship conflict. Moreover, romantic relationship stress and romantic relationship conflict will be negatively associated with romantic relationship satisfaction. Additionally, the researcher is interested in assessing which
social networking site has a stronger association on romantic relationship satisfaction through relationship stress and conflict. Thus, the following hypotheses and research question is posed.

**H1:** Active Facebook (H1a), Twitter (H1b), and Instagram (H1c) usage will be positively associated with romantic relationship stress.

**H2:** Active Facebook (H2a), Twitter (H2b), and Instagram (H2c) usage will be positively associated with romantic relationship conflict.

**H3:** Romantic relationship stress (H3a) and romantic relationship conflict (H3b) will be negatively associated with romantic relationship satisfaction.

**RQ1:** Which social media site (Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram) has a stronger association on romantic relationship satisfaction through the mediating role of romantic relationship stress (RQ1a) and romantic relationship conflict (RQ1b)?
CHAPTER 3

METHOD

3.1. Procedure and Participants

The primary researcher is a Florida State University graduate student specializing in Integrated Marketing Communication. The researcher obtained approval for this study from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to data collection, which began in February of 2021. Participants completed an online survey that was designed using Qualtrics software, and the sample was collected through the School of Communication Sona System. The survey asked the following: (1) inclusion criteria, (2) the participant’s active Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram usage, (3) if the participant has encountered romantic relationship stress or conflict, (4) if the participant has experienced romantic relationship satisfaction, (5) demographics, (6) length of romantic relationship, (7) whether the participant met their current or most recent partner on a SNS, and, finally, (8) control measures. The survey took approximately 20-30 minutes to complete.

Two hundred and twenty-seven student individuals were recruited for this study. Indeed, the studies reviewed in the literature had roughly 200-250 participants; hence, over 200 participants were recruited for this study. The original sample included 236 participants, but nine participants were eliminated due to missing data. Thus, the final sample size was N = 227 participants. The sample was predominantly heterosexual (92.1%) and women (87.2%) and Caucasian (78.9%) and on average 20.77 years of age (SD = 2.08). Participants reported being in their current relationship on average for 17.88 months (SD = 18.75), and 14.5% of the sample met their current romantic partner on social media. Furthermore, on average, participants identified as Asian or Pacific Islander (4.8%), Black or African American (7%), Hispanic or
Latino (15.4%), and Caucasian (78.9%). On average, participants described their romantic relationship as straight (92.1%), gay (0.4%), queer (0.4%), same-gender loving (0.4), lesbian (3.5%), bisexual (3.1%), and asexual (0.9%). Additionally, on average, participants reported spending 19.08 (SD = 27.13) minutes per day on Facebook, 68.10 (SD = 73.24) on Instagram, and 27.37 (SD = 53.60) on Twitter.

3.2. Inclusion Criteria

The researcher asked the participants to indicate if they have a Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter account. Those who indicated that they do not have a SNS account were automatically directed out of the survey and unable to proceed. Furthermore, the researcher asked the participants to indicate if they are currently or have ever been in a romantic relationship. Those who indicated that they do not meet this criterion were automatically directed out of the survey and unable to proceed.

3.3. Active SNS Use

This study used items in Gerson’s and colleagues’ (2017) Passive Active Use Measure (PAUM) scale to measure active SNS use. Previous studies have shown the scale to be highly reliable with a Cronbach’s alpha = 0.76 (Gerson et al., 2017). The researcher only used the use “active” items from the PAUM to measure Facebook, and then adapted them to measure Instagram and Twitter. Example items included: “How frequently do you perform the following activities when you are on [SNS]?”. The following will include: (1) posting status updates; (2) commenting; (3) direct messaging others; (4) posting photos; (5) browsing the newsfeed actively; (6) tagging photos; (7) posting videos; and (8) tagging videos. Data were gathered using a Likert scale ranging from 1 = “never” to 5 = “very frequently.” The overall mean of this scale for Facebook was M = 2.13 (SD = 0.70), Cronbach’s alpha = 0.85; Instagram was M = 3.11 (SD
= 0.78), Cronbach’s alpha = 0.86; and Twitter was M = 1.92 (SD = 0.84), Cronbach’s alpha = 0.88, respectively.

### 3.4. Stress within the Romantic Relationship

The current study measured romantic relationship stress using Du Bois’ and colleagues’ (2016) 25-item Romantic Relationship Stress Scale (RRSS). This scale has four parts. For this study, “part 2” which focuses on stress in romantic relationships was used. Part 2 of the scale has 11-items. An example item includes, “my relationship helps to relieve my daily stress.” Each statement is anchored by 1 = “Never” to 7 = “Always.” Each part of the scale has shown to be highly reliable with Cronbach’s alpha > 0.76, with part 2 = 0.88 (Du Bois et al., 2016). The overall mean of this scale was M = 2.70 (SD = 1.00) with a Cronbach’s alpha = 0.88.

### 3.5. Romantic Relationship Conflict

The current study measured romantic relationship conflict using Zacchilli, Hendrick, and Hendrick’s (2009) Romantic Partner Conflict Scale. Previous studies have shown the scale to be highly reliable with a Cronbach’s alpha = 0.85 (Zacchilli et al., 2009). This scale consists of 39 statements that are measured using a Likert scale ranging from 0 = “strongly disagree” to 4 = “strongly agree.” Example items include: “We try to find solutions that are acceptable to both of us” and “We often resolve conflict by talking about the problem.” The overall mean of this scale was M = 3.09 (SD = 0.33) with a Cronbach’s alpha = 0.76.

### 3.6. Romantic Relationship Satisfaction

The current study measured romantic relationship satisfaction using Hendrick’s (1988) Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.86). The scale consists of 7 items including “How well does your partner meet your needs?” and “In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?” and “How good is your relationship compared to most?” and “How
often do you wish you hadn’t gotten in this relationship?” and “To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations:” and “How much do you lose your partner?” and “How many problems are there in your relationship?” Data were gathered using a Likert scale ranging from 1 = poor to 5 = excellent. The overall mean of this scale in this study was M = 4.03 (SD = 0.90) with a Cronbach’s alpha = 0.92.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

4.1. Data Analysis Plan

To test the hypotheses and answer the research questions, the data were submitted to a mediation analysis using Model 4 of Andrew Hayes’ PROCESS Macro (Hayes, 2018). This analysis was conducted to examine the association between each predictor variable (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) with romantic relationship stress and romantic relationship satisfaction, and to then examine the indirect effect of romantic relationship stress on the association between each SNS and romantic relationship satisfaction. To be clear, a mediation analysis for each SNS using romantic relationship stress as the mediator variable and relationship satisfaction as the criterion was conducted. The same analyses were then conducted but with romantic relationship conflict as the mediator variable. Thus, a total of six mediation analyses were conducted to examine the unique association between each SNS (3) and each mediator (2) on romantic relationship satisfaction. The mediation analyses provide Standardized Bs for each association as well as the point estimate for the indirect effect of each mediator. The results are reported below.

4.2. Examination of Hypotheses

H1 predicted that active Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram usage will be positively associated with romantic relationship stress. However, the analysis for each SNS revealed that active Facebook (B = -.09, SE = .09, p = .33), Twitter (B = -.14, SE = .07, p = .06), or Instagram (B = .08, SE = .08, p = .33) use was not significantly associated with romantic relationship stress. Thus, H1 was not supported. Next, H2 predicted that active Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram usage would be positively associated with relationship conflict. The mediation analysis for each
SNS revealed that active Facebook (B = .002, SE = .03, p = .94), Twitter (B = -.0002, SE = .02, p = .99), or Instagram (B = .03, SE = .02, p = .28) use was not significantly associated with romantic relationship conflict. Therefore, H2 was not supported. Furthermore, H3 predicted that romantic relationship stress and romantic relationship conflict would be negatively associated with romantic relationship satisfaction. As shown in Figure 1, romantic relationship stress was significantly and negatively associated with romantic relationship satisfaction (B = -.76, SE = .03, p < .001), whereas romantic relationship conflict was not (B = -.22 SE = .17, p = .198, see Figure 2). Thus, H3 was partially supported.

Figure 1. Andrew Hayes Mediation Model 4 with 5,000 Bootstrap Samples.
Note. Unstandardized path coefficients are reported for each association. Note. * p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 *** p < 0.001. Note. Model 4 was run separately for each SNS usage resulting in three analyses with romantic relationship stress as a mediator; however, each SNS association is presented in this one figure for conciseness. Note. The point estimates for the indirect effects are reported in text.
Figure 2. Andrew Hayes Mediation Model 4 with 5,000 Bootstrap Samples. Note. Unstandardized path coefficients are reported for each association. Note. * $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$. Note. Model 4 was run separately for each SNS usage resulting in three analyses with romantic relationship conflict as a mediator; however, each SNS association is presented in this one figure for conciseness. Note. The point estimates for the indirect effects are reported in text.

RQ1 asked: Which social media site (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram) has a stronger association on romantic relationship satisfaction through the mediating role of romantic relationship stress (RQ1a) and romantic relationship conflict (RQ1b)? The mediation analysis revealed a non-significant indirect effect of romantic relationship stress on the relationship between Facebook and romantic relationship satisfaction (indirect effect = .06, bootSE = .07, BootLLCI = -.0696, BootULCI = .2127). Similarly, there was a non-significant indirect effect of romantic relationship stress on the relationship between Instagram and romantic relationship satisfaction (indirect effect = -.06, bootSE = .071, BootLLCI = -.2000, BootULCI = .0828). There was also a non-significant indirect effect of romantic relationship stress on the relationship between Twitter and romantic relationship satisfaction (indirect effect = .11, bootSE = .062, BootLLCI = -.0025, BootULCI = .2432). Thus, romantic relationship stress did not have an
indirect effect on the relationship between SNS use (i.e., Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) and romantic relationship satisfaction.

To examine RQ1b, the same analyses were conducted as RQ1a with romantic relationship conflict as the mediator (rather than romantic relationship stress) in order to examine the indirect effect of romantic relationship conflict on the association between each SNS and romantic relationship satisfaction. The mediation analysis revealed a non-significant indirect effect of romantic relationship conflict on the relationship between Facebook and romantic relationship satisfaction (indirect effect = -.0006, bootSE = .01, BootLLCI = -.0254, BootULCI = .0203). Similarly, there was a non-significant indirect effect of romantic relationship conflict on the relationship between Instagram and romantic relationship satisfaction (indirect effect = -.007, bootSE = .001, BootLLCI = -.0342, BootULCI = .0122). Finally, there was not a significant indirect effect of romantic relationship conflict on the relationship between Twitter and romantic relationship satisfaction (indirect effect = .0001, bootSE = .008, BootLLCI = -.0198, BootULCI = .0183).
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The current study investigated the relationship between active SNS use and romantic relationship stress, conflict, and satisfaction. The researcher hypothesized that active Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram usage would be positively associated with romantic relationship stress and romantic relationship conflict and that these two variables would be negatively associated with romantic relationship satisfaction. The researcher further proposed that active SNS use would be associated with romantic relationship satisfaction and that this relationship would be separately mediated by romantic relationship stress and conflict. The researcher tested these hypotheses using two mediation models using bootstrapping methods (Hayes, 2018). The results indicated that active SNS use is not associated with romantic relationship conflict and stress and that the relationship between social media sites (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram) and romantic relationship satisfaction is not mediated by romantic relationship stress or conflict. The theoretical and practical implications of these results are discussed in detail below.

The current study first sought to examine whether active Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram usage would be positively associated with romantic relationship stress and romantic relationship conflict. These hypotheses were based on the extant literature, wherein several studies have demonstrated a positive association between SNS usage and romantic relationship conflict, such as Clayton and colleagues (2013, 2014, 2016, 2020), as well as Muise et al. (2009, 2014), among others. However, each of these studies examined one SNS as it relates to romantic relationship conflict. The current study expanded this area of research by examining three SNSs simultaneously in regard to not only romantic conflict but also romantic relationship stress. The results from this study did not find evidence between active Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram
usage with romantic relationship stress or romantic relationship conflict. These results run
counter to the extant body of literature examining SNS usage and the “dark side effects” of SNS.
One explanation for the lack of findings with romantic relationship stress might be due, in part,
to the extent to which the individuals actively use their SNSs. While other measures, such as
access frequency or minutes per day spent on a given SNS, are adequate and broad measures of
use, it is more informative to understand how users are actually spending their time on the
platforms. Thus, the Passive Active Use Measure (PAUM) Scale was utilized as a valid and
reliable means for measuring SNS engagement. However, the results indicate that active SNS
use is not associated with relationship stress. There is a possibility that some SNSs are not being
used actively, and individuals are passively browsing their newsfeed or checking their friends’
profiles. Perhaps active SNS use would be positively associated with relationship stress had only
the active social measures (i.e., posting status updates, commenting, tagging) been examined.
Furthermore, this study sheds lights on how individual personality differences can influence how
users engage with SNSs. As stated previously, the sample was predominantly heterosexual
Caucasian women, so future work in this area should examine a more representative sample.

In terms of romantic relationship conflict, it is possible that the null finding was due, in
part, to scale selection. Upon further review of the 39-item Romantic Partner Conflict Scale
(RPCS), the subscale titled ‘Interactional Reactivity’ appears to best measure conflict rather than
the entirety of the scale or different subscales of the RPCS, such as the compromise subscale. For
example, sample items from the interactional reactivity subscale included: “our conflict usually
last quite awhile” and “my partner and I have frequent conflicts” and “I suffer a lot from conflict
with my partner.” Perhaps active SNS use would be positively associated with romantic
relationship conflict had the interactional reactivity subscale been examined as a mediator rather
than the entire scale, which again, included other subscales that are not necessarily conflict related. Thus, future research should examine this subscale in the context of this study in the future.

Next, the researcher examined whether romantic relationship stress and romantic relationship conflict would be positively associated with romantic relationship satisfaction. This investigation was based on the systemic-transactional model of dyadic coping, which focuses on the impact of the effect of daily stress in relationship functioning (i.e., time share together, communication, and well-being), and how those mediators are associated with relationship satisfaction and the probability of negative outcomes (i.e., breakup or divorce) (Bodenmann, 1995; González-Rivera & Hernández-Gato, 2019; Revenson et al., 2005). As predicted, there was a significant and negative association between romantic relationship stress and romantic relationship satisfaction but not relationship conflict and relationship satisfaction. Thus, this finding supports the extant literature demonstrating that relationship stressors negatively affect relationship satisfaction, as well as supports the systemic-transactional model of dyadic coping.

As for the lack of findings between conflict and satisfaction, again, this may be due to scale selection rather than using the specific subscale related to relationship conflict (i.e., interactional reactivity subscale). Additionally, the current study utilized Sona Systems through Florida State University to recruit participants, while related studies (Billedo et al., 2015; Chen, 2011; Clayton, 2014; Fox & Rooney, 2015; Norton & Baptist, 2014) that did not use a student sample found more significant results. Given the convenience sampling nature of Sona Systems, this study focused on examining Generation Z and established a predominantly straight white female sample. Perhaps the findings would be different if the researcher did not use a student sample. Finally, this study examined the mediating effect of romantic relationship stress and romantic
relationship conflict on the association between active SNS usage and relationship satisfaction. There was no evidence of mediation in this study. This is unsurprising given the lack of initial significant associations between active SNS usage and relationship stress and relationship conflict.

There are several possible explanations for these findings given that the results reported herein run counter to the extant body of literature in this area of research. A few are noted here. First, Clayton and colleagues’ studies examined a specific type of conflict, namely conflict related to SNS (e.g., Facebook-related conflict). Moreover, those studies investigated infidelity and dissolution rather than relationship satisfaction. Thus, it is possible that relationship conflict is associated with SNS usage only when partners experience romantic conflict related specifically to one’s SNS usage, rather than conflict, in general. Moreover, SNS-related conflict has been found to be associated with infidelity and dissolution, although this study found no association between relationship conflict and stress and romantic relationship satisfaction. However, these are clearly two related but separate concepts. Thus, it should be noted that future research should distinguish between SNS-related conflict and more general relationship conflict and continue to measure other possible relationship outcomes aside from dissolution, infidelity, and satisfaction.

5.1. Limitations

The findings of the current study must be taken in light of several limitations. First, this was a correlational study, so causal relationships cannot be concluded. Second, since participants were recruited using a non-probability, convenience sampling method via Sona Systems, generalizations cannot be made to a specific population. Additionally, social desirability is inevitable with any self-reported survey but especially when the topics being questioned are
personal or sensitive—like the current study. Participants were informed the study would be examining social media habits and romantic relationship conflict, stress, and satisfaction, so the results may be skewed, regardless of participant confidentiality.

Although each participant had a Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram account, the majority of participants did not indicate using each SNS everyday via reporting the number of minutes per day spent on each SNS. Because of this, the participants’ responses in the PAUM Scale for each SNS are not valid. Therefore, future research should consider only investigating those who have all three SNS account and actually use each platform every day. As noted in the literature, there are a few moderating variables that have the potential to strengthen the associations observed in the current study. More specifically, the length of relationship (current or most recent) and age of participants might have moderated the mediational effects. It is worth investigating whether the length of one’s romantic relationship would reveal a mediator relationship—thus, supporting Clayton’s and colleagues’ (2013, 2014) findings. However, despite all the limitations, these findings may serve as a reference for future studies and replication.

5.2. Implications for Further Research

The current study provides many possibilities for future research. Additional research should explore other mediators in the current study’s model. For example, a future study can investigate the same three SNSs (i.e., Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) simultaneously in the prediction of SNS-related stress and relationship dissolution overtime. A longitudinal experimental study could examine couples that are currently in romantic relationships and are active SNS users relative to those who are not active SNS users over the course of a year. The proposed study may produce interesting results as they relate to social media usage and romantic relationship conflict. Since many related studies are correlational and cross-sectional, it is
possible that high active SNS usage can influence a range of dependent variables. Instead of investigating relationship satisfaction like the current study, future research can explore how SNS use or posting behavior predicts relationships outcomes—positive or negative.

Under the systemic-transactional model of dyadic coping, the researcher tested a model that hypothesized that relationship conflict would mediate the relationship between active SNS usage and relationship satisfaction. Although the study found no mediation, the results provide a foundation for understanding the potential “dark side effects” and timely trends regarding SNS usage and its impact on romantic relationships. Thus, future research should explore different dyadic coping models associated with relationships among the variables examined in the study. Dyadic coping has proven to be a significant predictor of relationship satisfaction as well as partner well-being (Bodenmann, 1995; Bodenmann et al., 2007; Revenson et al., 2005), so a future study could be conducted at the dyadic level as opposed to the individual level—thus, providing a greater understanding of couples as opposed to individuals in relationships. Allowing both individuals in the couple to participate would allow for observations and analyses between partners, and, potentially, more significant results.

In practical terms, the literature provided has stressed that high SNS usage has the potential to damage romantic relationships. Additionally, the systemic-transactional model of dyadic coping is widely applicable and can be utilized in other fields of research (e.g., psychology, medicine, and social sciences), as well as with different types (e.g., age, gender, sexual orientation) of couples. For that reason, those working with distressed couples, whether professionally or casually, should consider increasing their dyadic coping skills to better understand the way in which couples cope with relationship stress. Thus, this theory is useful and effective within the contexts of both research and clinical work. Readers and SNS users should
consider the results with respect to the existing literature pertaining to SNS usage and romantic relationships. Despite the limited findings from this study, there is a strong and profuse amount of evidence that suggests SNS usage is positively related to relationship conflict, jealousy, infidelity, and negative outcomes, such as dissolution (Clayton et al., 2013; Clayton, 2014; Ridgway & Clayton, 2016; Stewart & Clayton, 2020; Fox & Moreland, 2015; Frampton & Fox, 2018; McLean et al., 2015). That is, the non-significant results from this one study should not disprove or refute the overarching themes in this area of research given the methodological limitations.

5.3. Conclusion

The results from this study indicate that active SNS use is not associated with romantic relationship conflict and stress and that the relationship between social media sites (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram) and romantic relationship satisfaction is not mediated by romantic relationship stress or conflict. Although the results may not add to the extant body of literature examining predictors of SNS use and romantic relationships, the current study may provide a foundation for further investigations of whether active Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram use attributes to romantic stress, conflict, and satisfaction.
Dear Faith Delle:

On 11/17/2020, the IRB staff reviewed the following submission:

Type of Review: Exempt
(2)(i) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation (non-identifiable)

Title: The Role of Social Media in Romantic Relationships: Examining posting behavior and its effects on conflict and satisfaction

Investigator: Faith Delle

Submission ID: STUDY00001686
Study ID: STUDY00001686
Funding: None
Grant ID: None

IND, IDE, or HDE: None

Documents Reviewed:
- Hypotheses and Research Question.pdf, Category: Information Sheet;
- Research Design.pdf, Category: Information Sheet;
- Survey Questions.pdf, Category: Survey/Questionnaire;
- IRB Certificate - Delle.pdf, Category: Other;
- Consent Form, Category: Consent Form;
- Debrief Form, Category: Consent Form;
- Protocol, Category: IRB Protocol;

The IRB staff determined that the protocol qualifies for exemption, effective on 11/17/2020.
Your study conforms to FSU policy on COVID-19-related requirements and restrictions related to research activities that involve in-person interventions or interactions with human research
participants. Once the COVID-19-related requirements and restrictions are lifted and you plan to substitute remote interactions or interventions with in-person alternatives, or plan to include as human subjects persons who were previously excluded due to their high risk for severe illness from COVID-19 or ages 65 or more years, please be sure to submit a modification to the IRB for its review of these substitutions. If however you only plan to discontinue other COVID-19-specific risk mitigation (e.g., social distancing, screening, use of PPE), then no study modification request need to be submitted to the IRB for review before these changes may be implemented. For all other study modifications, see notes below.

You are advised that any modification(s) to the protocol for this project that may alter this exemption determination must be reviewed and approved prior to implementation of the proposed modification(s).

Modifications to the research may invalidate the exemption determination (because the research no longer meets the exemption criteria described in HRP-312 – WORKSHEET – Exemption Determination).

Examples of minor changes to exempt research that would not alter the exemption determination and should therefore not be submitted to the IRB for further review include the following:

- Making administrative (formatting, grammar, spelling) revisions to the protocol, consent or recruitment materials or other study documents
- Adding or revising non-sensitive questions or non-identifiable response options to a survey, interview, focus group or other data collection instrument
- Increasing or decreasing the number of study subjects—unless adding a new study sample such as children or prisoners or adding a new source of data or records
- Making study team/personnel changes—except a change in Principal Investigator (PI)

Examples of changes to exempt research that do require prospectively submitting a modification to the IRB before implementing changes include the following:

- Making substantive revisions or additions (e.g., change in PI; funding source; sample; source of study subjects or their data; study sites or settings; procedures, interventions or interactions with study subjects; use of any drug, device, supplement or biologic; study subjects’ time or duration spent performing or participating in study activities) to the protocol, consent or recruitment materials or other study documents
- Adding or revising sensitive questions or identifiable response options to a survey, interview, focus group or other data collection instrument
- Adding a new study sample such as children or prisoners or adding a new source of data or records
- Obtaining, using, studying, analyzing, generating, storing or maintaining identifiable information or identifiable biospecimens in addition to or in lieu of de-identified or anonymous information or specimens
- Change in study risks (e.g., impact upon study subjects; impact upon students’ opportunity to learn educational content or assessment of educators who provide instruction; any disclosure of study subjects’ responses outside of the research may place study subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to subjects’ financial standing, employability, educational advancement or reputation)
- Change in Principal Investigator (PI) or (for students) faculty advisor
- New or change in financial interest
In conducting this protocol, you are required to follow the applicable requirements listed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103), which can be found by navigating to the Library within the RAMP IRB system.

Sincerely,

Office for Human Subjects Protection (OHSP)
Florida State University Office of Research
2010 Levy Avenue, Building B Suite 276
Tallahassee, FL 32306-2742
Phone: 850-644-7900
OHSP Group Email: humansubjects@fsu.edu
OHSP Web: https://www.research.fsu.edu/hs
APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

Title of the Study: The Role of Social Media in Romantic Relationships: Examining posting behavior and its effects on conflict and satisfaction

Principal Investigator: Faith Delle, Graduate Student in School of Communication at Florida State University

Faculty Advisor: Russell Clayton, Associate Professor in School of Communication at Florida State University

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Please find below information about this research for you to think about before you decide to take part. Ask us if you have any questions about this information or the research before you decide to take part.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Information for You to Consider</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statement of the Research Study.</strong> You are being invited to volunteer to take part in our research study. It is up to you whether you choose to take part or not. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits to you if you choose not to take part or decide later not to take part.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose.</strong> We are conducting this research to examine the role of media usage in everyday lives of those who are in current romantic relationship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duration.</strong> We think that taking part in our study will last no more than 30 minutes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Activities.</strong> You will be asked to complete an online questionnaire. You will be asked for demographic information, your perceived levels of social media use, if you have experienced romantic relationship conflict, and if you have experience romantic relationship satisfaction. The demographic information will be used for classification purposes only. You can skip any questions that make you feel uncomfortable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Risks:</strong> The study poses no more than minimal risks, and all responses will be confidential.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Benefits:</strong> As a result of taking part in this research, you will learn more about how media research is conducted and aid researchers in understanding the impact of social media usage.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is this study about?
In this survey, you will be asked to answer questions about your romantic life. Additionally, you will be asked questions pertaining to your social media usage as well as some demographic questions. You are eligible to participate in this study only if you meeting the following criteria: (1) you are between 18-65 years of age; (2) you have a Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter account; and (3) you are currently in a romantic relationship.

You are one of 200 persons to take part in this study. Your involvement in the study is expected to last approximately 30 minutes.

What will happen during this research?
If you agree to be in this research, your participation will include completing an online questionnaire. You will be asked for demographic information, your perceived levels of social
media use, and questions about your romantic life. The demographic information will be used for classification purposes only. You can skip any questions that make you feel uncomfortable.

**What will you do to protect my privacy?**
The results of the study may be published or presented, but no information that may identify you will ever be provided or released in publications or presentations. We will take steps to protect your privacy and confidentiality. Your name will not appear on any of the results, nor will you put any form of identification on the questionnaire. No individual responses will be reported. Only group findings will be reported. The information in the study records will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law. Data will be stored securely in a locked file where only the researcher will have access. Data will be destroyed within five years from the time of collection.

Despite taking steps to protect your privacy or the confidentiality of your identifiable information, we cannot guarantee that your privacy or confidentiality will be protected. For example, if you tell us something that makes us believe that you or others have been or may be physically harmed, we may need to report that information to the appropriate agencies.

Individuals and organizations responsible for conducting or monitoring this research may be permitted access to and inspect the research records. This includes the Florida State University Institutional Review Board (FSU IRB), which reviewed this study, Faith Delle, and Dr. Russell Clayton.

The information collected as part of this research will not be used or distributed for future research studies, even if all of your identifiers are removed.

**What are the risks of harms or discomforts associated with this research?**
The study poses no more than minimal risks.

**How might I benefit from this research?**
As a result of taking part in this research, you will learn more about how media research is conducted and aid researchers in understanding the impact of social media usage. There may be no personal benefit from your participation, but the knowledge received may be of value to society.

**What is the compensation for the research?**
For participating, you will receive either (a) credit toward a class requirement or (b) extra credit for your class, the amount of which is determined by the instructor of the course from which you were recruited. Different instructors give different types and amounts of credit for participating in this study. If you have questions about the exact type or amount of credit that you can receive, then you can postpone and reschedule your participation without penalty. The researchers will communicate this information to your instructor, in plenty of time to have that credit count toward your class this semester.
What will happen if I choose not to participate?
Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may decline to participate without penalty (including no negative effect on your grade) at any time.

If you choose not to participate in this research, you may participate in another Sona study as an alternative or alternative research assignments offered in your class by the instructor.

Is my participation voluntary, and can I withdraw?
Taking part in this research study is your decision. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You do not have to take part in this study, but if you do, you can stop at any time. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your relationship with Faith Delle, Dr. Russell Clayton, Florida State University, or the School of Communication. There are no penalties to which you are otherwise entitled, if you do not participate.

You have the right to choose not to participate in any study activity or completely withdraw from continued participation at any point in this study without penalties to which you are otherwise entitled.

If you withdraw from the study, the data collected to the point of withdrawal will be deleted and not used in further analyses.

Who do I talk to if I have questions?
If you have questions, concerns, or have experienced a research-related injury, contact the research team at:

 Faith Delle (graduate student)  
 Dr. Russell Clayton (faculty advisor)  
 (850) 645-9600  
 rclayton@fsu.edu

The Florida State University Institutional Review Board (“IRB”) is overseeing this research. The FSU IRB is a group of people who perform official independent review of research studies before studies begin to ensure that the rights and welfare of participants are protected. If you have questions about your rights or wish to speak with someone other than the research team, you may contact:

 Florida State University IRB  
 2010 Levy Drive, Suite 276  
 Tallahassee, Florida 32306  
 850-644-7900  
 humansubjects@fsu.edu

STATEMENT OF CONSENT
I have read and considered the information presented in this form. I confirm that I meet the following criteria: (1) I am between 18-65 years of age; (2) I have a Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter account; and (3) I am currently in a romantic relationship.

If you do NOT meet these three criteria, please close the survey browser now.
APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHICS

Which best describes your sexual orientation (choose all that apply):
- asexual
- bisexual
- gay
- straight (heterosexual)
- lesbian
- pansexual
- queer
- questioning or unsure
- same-gender loving
- an identity not listed: please specify ____________________________
- prefer not to disclose

Which best describes your current romantic relationship (choose all that apply):
- asexual
- bisexual
- gay
- straight (heterosexual)
- lesbian
- pansexual
- queer
- questioning or unsure
- same-gender loving
- an identity not listed: please specify ____________________________
- prefer not to disclose

Age:
Please type in your age in years (i.e., 20). ______

Which best describes your gender identity (choose all that apply):
- agender
- androgyne
- demigender
- genderqueer or gender fluid
- man
- questioning or unsure
- trans man
- trans woman
- woman
- additional gender category/identity: please specify ____________________________
- prefer not to disclose
**Length of romantic relationship**
Length of your current romantic relationship in months (i.e. 36) ____________.

**Time Spent on Social Media.** Please rate the following statements. You may refer to your screen time on your iPhone or Android to ensure accuracy in your response.

How many minutes do you spend on Facebook a day _____________.
How many minutes do you spend on Instagram a day _____________.
How many minutes do you spend on Twitter a day _____________.

APPENDIX D

PASSIVE ACTIVE USE MEASURE (PAUM) SCALE


How frequently do you perform the following activities when you are on Facebook?

1= Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4= somewhat frequently, 5= very frequently

Posting Status updates
Commenting (on statuses, wall posts, pictures, etc)
Chatting on Fb Chat
Posting Photos
Browsing the newsfeed actively (liking and commenting on posts, pictures, and updates)
Tagging Photos
Posting videos
Tagging Videos

How frequently do you perform the following activities when you are on Instagram?

1= Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4= somewhat frequently, 5= very frequently

Posting Status updates
Commenting (on pictures, stories, posts, etc)
Direct messaging others
Posting Photos
Browsing the newsfeed actively (liking and commenting on posts and pictures)
Tagging Photos
Posting videos
Tagging Videos

How frequently do you perform the following activities when you are on Twitter?

1= Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4= somewhat frequently, 5= very frequently

Posting a tweet or RT
Commenting (on pictures, stories, tweets, etc)
Direct messaging others
Posting Photos
Browsing the newsfeed actively (liking and commenting on tweets, pictures, stories)
Tagging Photos
Posting videos
Tagging Video
APPENDIX E

ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP STRESS SCALE (RRSS)


Part 2: Respond to the following questions using this scale:

1 - - - - - 2 - - - - - 3 - - - - - 4 - - - - - 5 - - - - - 6 - - - - - 7
Never                                  Sometimes                                  Always

1. My relationship helps relieve my daily stress.

2. Arguments between me and my partner are usually resolved within a single conversation.

3. My partner and I argue about the same topics frequently.

4. I would be less stressed with a different partner.

5. Discussing sensitive topics (e.g., money, children, housing) with my partner leads to further conflict.

6. I am concerned that my partner does not understand me.

7. My partner and I respect each other’s thought and opinions.

8. My partner infringes on my independence.

9. My partner is critical/disapproving.

10. I go to bed angry with my partner.

11. My partner’s friends or family interfere with our relationship.
APPENDIX F

ROMANTIC PARTNER CONFLICT SCALE


The Romantic Partner Conflict Scale includes 39 items with six subscales. The subscales include: Compromise, Avoidance, Interactional Reactivity, Separation, Domination, and Submission. The purpose of this scale is to measure everyday conflict experienced by individuals in romantic relationships.

**Scoring Instructions:**

Compute means for each subscale by using the following guide.

- **Compromise:** Items 1-14
- **Avoidance:** Items 15-17
- **Interactional Reactivity:** Items 18-23
- **Separation:** Items 24-28
- **Domination:** Items 29-34
- **Submission:** Items 35-39

Think about how you handle conflict with your romantic partner. Specifically, think about a significant conflict issue that you and your partner have disagreed about recently. Using the scale below, fill in which response is most like how you handled conflict. If you do not have a romantic partner, respond with your most current partner in mind. If you have never been in a romantic relationship, answer in terms of what you think your responses would most likely be.

For each item, answer as follows:

- **0** = Strongly disagree with statement
- **1** = Moderately disagree with statement
- **2** = Neutral, neither agree nor disagree
- **3** = Moderately agree with statement
- **4** = Strongly agree with statement

1. We try to find solutions that are acceptable to both of us.
2. We often resolve conflict by talking about the problem.
3. Our conflicts usually end when we reach a compromise.
4. When my partner and I disagree, we consider both sides of the argument.
5. In order to resolve conflicts, we try to reach a compromise.

6. Compromise is the best way to resolve conflict between my partner and me.

7. My partner and I negotiate to resolve our disagreements.

8. I try to meet my partner halfway to resolve a disagreement.

9. The best way to resolve conflict between me and my partner is to find a middle ground.

10. When we disagree, we try to find a solution that satisfies both of us.

11. When my partner and I have conflict, we collaborate so that we are both happy with our decision.

12. My partner and I collaborate to find a common ground to solve problems between us.

13. We collaborate to come up with the best solution for both of us when we have a problem.

14. We try to collaborate so that we can reach a joint solution to a conflict.

15. My partner and I try to avoid arguments.

16. I avoid disagreements with partner.

17. I avoid conflict with my partner.

18. When my partner and I disagree, we argue loudly.

19. Our conflicts usually last quite awhile.

20. My partner and I have frequent conflicts.

21. I suffer a lot from conflict with my partner.

22. I become verbally abusive to my partner when we have conflict.

23. My partner and I often argue because I do not trust him/her.

24. When we have conflict, we withdraw from each other for awhile for a “cooling off” period.

25. When we disagree, we try to separate for awhile so we can consider both sides of the argument.

26. When we experience conflict, we let each other cool off before discussing it further.
27. When we have conflict, we separate but expect to deal with it later.

28. Separation for a period of time can work well to let our conflicts cool down.

29. When we argue or fight, I try to win.

30. I try to take control when we argue.

31. I rarely let my partner win an argument.

32. When we disagree, my goal is to convince my partner that I am right.

33. When we argue, I let my partner know I am in charge.

34. When we have conflict, I try to push my partner into choosing the solution that I think is best.

35. When we have conflict, I usually give in to my partner.

36. I give in to my partner’s wishes to settle arguments on my partner’s terms.

37. Sometimes I agree with my partner so the conflict will end.

38. When we argue, I usually try to satisfy my partner’s needs rather than my own.

39. I surrender to my partner when we disagree on an issue
APPENDIX G

RELATIONSHIP ASSESSMENT SCALE (RAS)


Please mark on the answer sheet the letter for each item which best answers that item for you.

1. How well does your partner meet your needs?
   A B C D E
   Poorly Average Extremely well

2. In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?
   A B C D E
   Unsatisfied Average Extremely satisfied

3. How good is your relationship compared to most?
   A B C D E
   Poor Average Excellent

4. How often do you wish you hadn’t gotten in this relationship?
   A B C D E
   Never Average Very often

5. To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations:
   A B C D E
   Hardly at all Average Completely

6. How much do you love your partner?
   A B C D E
   Not much Average Very much

7. How many problems are there in your relationship?
   A B C D E
   Very few Average Very many

NOTE: Items 4 and 7 are reverse scored. A=1, B=2, C=3, D=4, E=5. You add up the items and divide by 7 to get a mean score.
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

An expected graduate of the M.S. in Integrated Marketing Communication program at Florida State University, where she also earned a bachelor’s degree in Psychology, Faith Delle is a Florida native passionate about understanding how people cognitively process and make meaning of mediated messages. During her time a graduate student, Faith served as a Research Assistant in the Cognition and Emotion Lab (CEL) and collaborated on a study examining the psychophysiological reactance to anti-vaping PSAs. Furthermore, Faith has taught two different undergraduate speech labs and is eager to continue working in the classroom. As a future doctoral student at Michigan State University, Faith hopes to continue researching social issues and health messages to build a richer understanding of the processes and effects of mass media. She is also interested in researching issues related to tobacco control, persuasion in narrative messages, patriarchal attitudes and the discrimination of women’s health, gender and multicultural representation in media, and positive media psychology.