



Social Media Use and Depression Symptoms in Emerging Adults

Kelly Nedorostek,¹ Anna Vannucci,² Christine McCauley Ohannessian, Ph.D.^{1,2}

¹University of Connecticut School of Medicine; ²Center for Behavioral Health, Connecticut Children's Medical Center



BACKGROUND

- ❖ In the United States, depression constitutes a major public health concern, prevalent in 14-22% of young adults and costing society more than \$200 billion each year
- ❖ The severity of symptoms has been found to be elevated in emerging adults in comparison to children and older adults
- ❖ The onset of depressive disorders is highest in adolescents and emerging adults, making emergent adulthood an important time period for clinical intervention
- ❖ Past studies have demonstrated an association between depression and social media use
- ❖ This study aimed to expand upon past research by assessing the relationship between social media use by platform and depressive symptoms

OBJECTIVE

- 1) To investigate the association between depression symptoms and social media use in emerging adults
- 2) To examine whether the relationship between social media use and depression symptoms differs by gender, race, or education level during emerging adulthood

METHODS

Participants: 598 emerging adults were recruited by Lightspeed GMI, a web-based recruiting company (50% female; 63% Caucasian; Age: M=20, SD=1.4 years; 60% attend college).

Procedure: An online survey was distributed in the spring of 2014. The survey took approximately 30 minutes to complete.

METHODS

Measures:

Construct	Measures
Demographic Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Gender ❖ Race/Ethnicity ❖ Age ❖ Highest Education Level Completed
Depression Symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D; $\alpha=.91$)
Social Media Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Technology Use Questionnaire ($\alpha=.86$)

Statistical Analysis: Data analysis were conducted using SPSS Statistics version 24. Correlations and regression models were the primary types of analyses conducted.

RESULTS

Overall Social Media Use

Social Media Use by Type:

- 82% use Facebook
- 51% use Instagram
- 48% use Snapchat
- 34% use Tumblr
- 46% use Twitter

of SM Sites Used:

- 9% use 0 sites
- 23% use 1 site
- 18% use 2 sites
- 18% use 3 sites
- 12% use 4 sites
- 20% use 5 sites

Table 1: Racial Differences in Social Media Use and Mean Time Spent on SM

	Black		White	
	% users	M (hrs)	% users	M (hrs)
Facebook	79%	1.4	85%	1.4
Instagram	65%	1.4	45%	.65
Snapchat	54%	.99	47%	.61
Tumblr	31%	.58	33%	.59
Twitter	60%	1.0	42%	.63
Total Time	--	5.3	--	3.9

Social Media and Depression Symptoms

Table 2: The Association Between Social Media Use and Depression Symptoms

Measure of SM Use	β	p value
SM Time Total	.23	.000
SM Type Total	.10	.095
SM Type x Time	.22	.000

Table 3: The Association Between Time Spent Using Social Media by Platform and Depression Symptoms

Platform	β	p value
Facebook	.16	.000
Instagram	.17	.000
Snapchat	.14	.001
Tumblr	.22	.000
Twitter	.16	.000

RESULTS

Differences in Gender, Race, and Education Level

- ❖ No gender differences were found
- ❖ No differences were found due to education level
- ❖ A racial difference was found between white and black emerging adults for Total SM Time ($\beta=.20, p<.05$) but not for Total SM Type and TypexTime

Figure 1: Depression Symptoms by Platform in White vs. Black Emerging Adults (Values are β Coefficients); * $p<.05$)

	Facebook	Instagram	Snapchat	Tumblr	Twitter
White vs. Black	.03	.16	.20*	.07	.21*
			↓		↓
			Snapchat: White ($\beta=.187; p=.000$) Black ($\beta=-.040; p=.753$)		Twitter White ($\beta=.212; p=.028$) Black ($\beta=-.022; p=.854$)

CONCLUSIONS

- ❖ When each platform was analyzed separately, all were found to be positively associated with depression symptoms
- ❖ No gender differences or differences due to education level were found
- ❖ A significant racial difference was found for Twitter and Snapchat
- ❖ Twitter and Snapchat use were positively associated with depression symptoms for Caucasians but not African Americans
- ❖ The mean time spent per day on Twitter and Snapchat was higher in African Americans than in Caucasians
- ❖ A higher percentage of African Americans use Twitter and Snapchat in comparison to Caucasian emerging adults

Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank Dr. Christine McCauley Ohannessian and the Center for Behavioral Health Team at CCMC for their invaluable guidance and support.