The Real and Perceived Effects of Social Media Usage on Relationship Outcomes

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**Real and Perceived Effects of Social Media Usage on Relationship Outcomes**

**Introduction & Method**
- Time spent together increases relationship satisfaction (Rusbult et al., 1998).
- Social media usage may replace time spent with romantic partners (Abbasi, 2019).

**Current Study**
- We hypothesized that both real and hypothetical social media usage would associate with decreased romantic relationship satisfaction.

**Participants**
- 138 total participants from Winthrop University, see figure.

**Materials**
- A 70-question survey assessed relationship satisfaction and personality traits with social media usage. This was done through the following:
  - Integration of social media use, 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).
  - Relationship satisfaction, 0 (do not agree at all) to 8 (very successful).
  - Frequency of social media, A to G.
  - Single participants’ personality with social media use, 1 (disagree strongly) to 7 (agree strongly).

**Procedures**
- All participants were asked to complete questions for the randomized hypothetical scenarios, integration of social media usage, frequency of social media usage, and demographics/filter.
- If the participant was in a relationship, they were asked to take the personality inventory and frequency of social media use.
- If the participant was single or abstained, they were asked to complete questions pertaining to relationship satisfaction, commitment, investment, and the alternatives.
- If the participant was single or abstained, they were asked to complete questions for the hypothetical scenarios.
- Assessment lasted for a duration of approximately 15 to 20 minutes.

**Results**

**Findings**
- **Significant Findings**
  - The scenario depicting a relationship with high social media usage ($M = 3.68$) was rated as significantly less likely to succeed than the low social media usage scenario, $M = 4.58$, $t(111) = 3.21$, $p = .002$, $d = .61$.
  - Additionally, the scenario depicting a relationship with high social media usage ($M = 3.63$) was rated as significantly less satisfying than the low social media usage scenario ($M = 4.42$), $t(111) = 2.54$, $p = .01$, $d = .48$.

- **Non-Significant Findings**
  - Our hypotheses pertaining to social media frequency use was not supported in the areas of social integration and emotional connection as a predictors of relationship satisfaction, commitment level, and investment size.
  - Additionally, our hypotheses using integration into social routines to predict relationship satisfaction and commitment level was not supported.
  - To conclude, correlations between the ten-item personality inventory and frequency of social media usage was not significant. The ten-item inventory personality included five subscales; extraversion, agreeableness, emotional stability, conscientiousness, and openness.

**Discussion, Implications, & Conclusion**
- **Importance of Significant/Non-Significant Findings**
  - We concluded that high social media usage is perceived as a barrier in romantic relationships meaning the more it is integrated into a daily social routine the less invested, they will become. Social media usage may potentially cause unforeseen consequences to romantic relationships and life.
  - We found that high social media usage is believed to cause significantly less success and satisfaction in romantic relationships. This is vital because there is a potential misconception that social media appears to not affect relationships. Knowing this, researchers can examine social media as an obstacle in relationships.

- **Implications**
  - Our data adds to the information on how social media affects people in many facets of life.
  - Our findings may influence people to use social media more mindfully. By doing this, this can allow for healthier relationship outcomes.

- **Limitations**
  - A constricted time frame to collect data.
  - Extraneous variables such as unreported relationship stressors

- **Conclusion**
  - In conclusion, social media usage intertwined with romantic relationship satisfaction is vital to understand because social media is one of the forerunners for how people conduct their daily lives.
  - We hypothesized that individuals’ levels of romantic relationship satisfaction decrease as social media usage increases. Although, this was not supported, smaller aspects illustrated important findings and were supported.