

**Facebook Usage and Perceived Relationship Satisfaction Among Married
Individuals**

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Author Note

I have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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Abstract

Current research on the effects of social media usage on adults has exploded within the last 2 decades, yielding a variety of results and spawning a multitude of further studies. The present study sought to evaluate how social networking site (SNS) usage, specifically Facebook, affects the perceived marital satisfaction of a sample of married, heterosexual adults. **Population.** All participants ($N = 293$) were recruited through online platforms ($M_{\text{age}} = 30.62$, $SD = 9.51$; 29.3% female). All participants were married heterosexuals with the average number of years married was 6.94 years ($SD = 8.11$). Of those sampled, 37 (12.6%) had not previously used Facebook, and 256 (87.4%) had previously used Facebook to some extent. **Method.** This investigative study used an online survey in which respondents provided demographic information and answered a series of questions from the Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI-32) pertaining to their satisfaction in their marriages. Descriptive statistics of the key independent and dependent variables, as well as of the demographic statistics, were produced. Second, a correlation analysis was used to assess if among individuals who use Facebook if there is an inverse relationship between amounts of Facebook usage and relationship satisfaction. Third, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to assess if there was an interaction between sex and Facebook usage (measured as a binary yes/no variable) on relationship satisfaction. Finally, pairwise comparisons (f -tests) were used to assess *where* there were male–female differences in relationship satisfaction based on Facebook usage. **Results.** The purpose of the present research was to investigate whether Facebook usage predicted relationship satisfaction. The current results provided partial support for the aforementioned hypotheses. First, among individuals who use Facebook, there was a

marginal inverse relationship between the amounts of Facebook usage and relationship satisfaction. Second, Facebook usage predicted marital satisfaction differently for men and women. Specifically, the results indicated that among regular Facebook users, women had greater relationship satisfaction than men. However, among those that did not use Facebook regularly, no difference in relationship satisfaction between men and women was discovered. Moreover, regular Facebook usage did not predict women's relationship satisfaction. However, regular Facebook usage did predict less relationship satisfaction among men. **Discussion.** Limitations to this study are explored. Further research is necessary to examine how other factors besides marriage affect SNS usage and marital satisfaction.

Keywords: Facebook, social media, marriage, relationship satisfaction, marital satisfaction

Chapter 1

Social Media Usage and Affect

The following sections address the existing body of research surrounding social media and its reverberations on users.

Positive and Negative Effects of Social Media Usage

Over the last several decades, Western culture has shifted dramatically into one propelled by advancements in technology. As social networking applications such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, LinkedIn, and myriads more develop and grow, so does the experience of human connectedness (Yamamoto & Ananou, 2015). In only the last decade, the world has rapidly grown into one where relationships, business, romance, entertainment, tragedy, and celebration can be facilitated and documented through an ever-growing amount of social networking applications (Jiang & Leung, 2012). As social media becomes increasingly prevalent in young individuals' lives, researchers are rushing to understand what the effects of excessive cyber social networking may be in the long term (Young, 2011; Young et al., 2011). Because social networking via the internet is relatively new (i.e., the first documented social media site having been curated in 1997), the research into this subject is relatively untouched and still being exposed (Hendricks, 2019). Much of the current research is ongoing and will not be conclusive until many years into the future when the long-term effects can be observed on an extensive timeline (Kapoor et al., 2018).

Negative Effects

In the *CyberPsychology, Behavior & Social Networking Journal*, a team of researchers studied social media users' interactions with Facebook and Pinterest and

hoped to find the motivations behind the usage of these two platforms as well as the emotional consequences of extensive use of these sites and applications (Lin et al., 2017). Using the 44-item Big Five Inventory, participants' personalities were measured and then divided into the five personality dimensions of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness (Lin et al., 2017). Social media users' motivations to use these networking sites was separated into the four categories of socialization, entertainment, self-status seeking, and information seeking. Using a 7-point scale, the participants in this study also reported the frequency and duration of their weekly use of Facebook and Pinterest (Lin et al., 2017). After analyzing the collected data, the findings indicated that the intensity of an individual's social media use is positively linked to negative emotions (Lin et al., 2017).

One study by Tromholt (2016) sought to investigate how much of an impact quitting Facebook would have on over 1000 Denmark-based participants. Tromholt's (2016) research hypothesized that when a treatment group underwent a 1-week hiatus from Facebook, they would experience more positive effects on their life satisfaction and emotions than the control group. Through recruitment on Facebook, 1,095 individuals (86% of whom were women who spent a little over an hour on Facebook every day) were sent a survey link with pretest questions (Tromholt, 2016). Once the questions were answered, the group was immediately assigned to either the treatment group (i.e., not using Facebook for the following week) or the control group (i.e., continue to use Facebook as usual throughout the week; Tromholt, 2016). When the last day of the experiment came, an online questionnaire was sent to all participants, which was completed by 81% of the sample (Tromholt, 2016). The results of this study provided

causative evidence illustrating that quitting Facebook leads to higher levels of overall satisfaction with life and “affective well-being” (Tromholt, 2016, p. 665). The sample participants who did not use Facebook for one week reported superior levels of satisfaction with life and better emotional states. It is worth noting that the results of a Denmark study are not necessarily generalizable to the whole human population.

However, it is worth considering that because Facebook is a worldwide social networking platform and has over 2.45 billion users, some of the adverse effects that avid Facebook users feel could be common across many diverse cultures (Facebook users worldwide, 2019, n.d.). The history and description of Facebook as well as existing research focusing on its effects on the psyche, body, and various classes of relationships is examined in the following section.

In the 2018 article published by Guinta and John, they discussed social media’s impact within hospital settings. The article focused on the manner in which nurses in this decade must be trained on how to educate young adults and their families about the intricacies of social media (Guinta & John, 2018). As social media becomes an increasing pillar in the individual’s life, nurses and other healthcare team members will need to develop a strategy to address the positive and negative effects of social media on young adults and adolescents (Guinta & John, 2018). Based on the still-emerging research of social media’s effects on the psyche, medical professionals continue to publish articles pleading with individuals to take detoxes from social media due to its damaging effects on the mind and body (Cohut, 2018).

The developmental phase of adolescence is shown to be a key part of developing a young person’s social identity (Elsayed, 2021; Marcia, 1966). Through reflecting on

one's values and observation, the adolescent is continuously generating decisions on how their identity will be presented to others (Elsayed, 2021; Rosenblum & Lewis, 2003). Although social media does present some benefits, the negative effects (i.e., threat and harassment, hostile interactions with others, the spread of false information, and the resulting depression, anxiety, isolation, and even suicide) are devastating to young people (Elsayed, 2021). Based on Marcia's (1966) theory of social identity, which is founded on the assumption that a well-defined and independently determined identity can be attained by the mature individual, Elsayed (2021) studied over 200 adolescents and discovered a variety of negative effects that social media had on the social identity. The researcher found that when assessing achievement, postponement, closure, and dispersion, four aspects of Marcia's social identity theory, nearly all participants experienced some form of damage to one or more of these categories through the detriments of social media (Elsayed, 2021). Due to the destructive nature of social media posed in the literature, Elsayed recommended families, schools, and other institutions take several measures were recommended to care for adolescents and prepare them for facing the perils of social media.

As of January 2021, the Asia Pacific region has been documented to show some of the highest levels of social media engagement in the world, with over 89% of the population using some form of social media regularly (Statista, 2021). In China, over 1 billion individuals use social networking sites (SNSs), far surpassing the second-placed country of India (Statista, 2021). Within the region of Asia, Facebook boasted a colossal number of monthly users and dominated the internet as the most widely used platform (Statista, 2021). In Asian Pacific countries, especially Thailand, the usage of social media

platforms is extremely popular among young people, with Facebook also being the most widely used within this demographic (Gulatee et al., 2021). In addition to personal computers, SNSs are also accessed largely through mobile phone platforms, creating higher rates of accessibility for the individual (Gulatee & Combes, 2018b; Gulatee et al., 2021). Participants in the study by Gulatee et al. (2021) admitted to social media impairing their concentration, listening skills, classroom engagement, and relationship problems, to name a few. Researchers postulate that individuals generally use social media to present themselves favorably and build a positive impression (Donath & Boyd, 2004; Mustafa et al., 2020).

In addition, these researchers believed that social media is heavily used to build social capital and for making and maintaining connections with friends and relatives (Ellison et al., 2007; Joinson, 2008; Mustafa et al., 2020). One study conducted in 2010 found that information obtained online is capable of restructuring the human brain, decreasing motivation, and lessening one's ability to focus (Carr, 2020; Mustafa et al., 2020). During the COVID-19 global pandemic of 2020, the average amount of time spent on social media significantly increased globally, especially in India, with the average amount of time spent on social networking sites in a day increasing from 3.08 hours to 5.17 hours (Mustafa et al., 2020). Seventy-five percent of individuals reported an increased amount of time spent on social media (Mustafa et al., 2020). According to Mustafa et al. (2020), a great number of the participants in their study reported feeling badly after using social media extensively.

Social media use has become commonplace in the lives of most individuals, especially among the young adult population (Smith & Anderson, 2019). In 2018, over

88% of young adults reported using some form of social media (Smith & Anderson, 2019). Morris and Aguilera (2012) discussed how within the last decade, mobile phones have taken on far greater emotional and practical significance in the lives of individuals, particularly young adults. The researchers discuss how the technological advancements of the 21st century, evidenced by the integration of social networking into mobile phones, have drastically altered daily living (Morris & Aguilera, 2012). As New York Times writer Richtel (2010) documented in his article investigating the prevalence of injuries occurring from distracted cell phone usage, the infatuation with technology is apparent simply walking around nearly any city and observing the number of young adults with their faces buried in their electronic devices. A study of over 500 young adults authored by Galica et al. (2017) investigated the relationship between social media use, antisocial personality disorder and conduct problems with young adults. Self-report surveys were completed online by all participating in this research. This study found positive correlations between social media use, conduct disorder symptoms, and antisocial behavior symptoms (Galica et al., 2017). The results of this study did not necessarily imply a causal relationship between social media and conduct disorder or antisocial behavior, but further research is certainly warranted based on these positive correlations.

The body of research regarding the effects of excessive social media usage is growing rapidly (Davis, 2012; Gross, 2004; Selfhout et al., 2009; Valkenburg et al., 2006). Young adults with high levels of social media usage tend to feel higher levels of social isolation than peers with lower levels of SNS usage (Valaitis, 2005). This study is just one of many that have reported higher levels of depressive feelings and poorer mental health quality associated with high volumes of social media consumption (Aalbers

et al., 2019; Mustafa et al., 2020; Raudsepp & Kais, 2019; Shensa et al., 2018). The regression analysis presented by Mustafa et al. (2020) suggested that younger users of social media are less likely to report positive effects from social media consumption. As the existing body of research and literature on this topic increases, it is vitally important that the effects of social media on mental health are communicated to users by parents, faculty, and family members (Mustafa et al., 2020).

Positive Effects

Despite the negative impact, social media has also been found to have several positive effects. SNSs provide a media-based setting that is facilitated using the world wide web as a platform allowing social media to become a useful tool in assembling groups to participate in any social gathering, protest, or movement. Hwang and Kim (2015) sought to discover the role that social media currently plays in garnering interest in social functions participation—more specifically, movements and protests. These researchers measured social media use by the time of use and how much of the SNS usage was for personal gain and entertainment versus how much of the usage was for participating in or discussing issues, conversations, and events bigger than themselves (Hwang & Kim, 2015). The results unsurprisingly demonstrated that participation in these social movements was significantly higher among those who avidly used social networking platforms (Hwang & Kim, 2015). The results also demonstrated that social networking platforms acted as a moderator variable that affects the relationship between social network usage and participation in mass social gatherings, protests, marches, and other events of significant attendance size (Hwang & Kim, 2015).

In democratic societies such as the United States, trust in government is a crucial element for development (Echeverría & Mani, 2020). As has been emphasized in recent years, the general public has lost a great deal of trust in news media sources, a faction of television that was once highly revered by the population (Dalton, 2017; Echeverría & Mani, 2020; Hetherington, 1998). During the 2018 Mexican presidential election, Echeverría sought to learn what impacts traditional and social media had on institutional trust (Echeverría & Mani, 2020). Although social media was hypothesized to diminish institutional trust, the researcher found that it had a greater positive effect on trust than traditional outlets such as television (Echeverría & Mani, 2020). These findings suggest that hybrid media systems (Chadwick, 2013) have a positive influence on institutional trust, especially for political parties and politicians in general (Echeverría & Mani, 2020).

In addition to sharing political information, social media outlets provide various opportunities for sharing health information and one's thoughts and behaviors toward health-related subjects (Bennett & Glasgow, 2009; Kreps & Neuhauser, 2010; Mou & Shen, 2018). Social media empowers its users by providing easy access to information and health-related support from others who may be struggling with similar issues, hopefully promoting positive behaviors via social support (Mou & Shen, 2018; Vaterlaus et al., 2015). Mou and Shen (2018) discovered that when individuals used SNSs to communicate their stories with one another and found commonalities in their journeys, users were more likely to adopt healthy habits such as exercise, medication adherence, and health eating (Green & Brock, 2000, 2002; Mou & Shen, 2018). This research suggests that social media can be an extremely powerful tool that can allow individuals to feel like they belong to something bigger than themselves—a tribe that they can be a part

of and relate with (Mou & Shen, 2018). When individuals feels seen and known by one another, they are more likely to accept influence from others and adopt new behaviors.

Although social media usage can often be distracting and lessen one's concentration, a number of studies have emerged supporting the notion that increased social media usage may enhance workers' job performance (Cao et al., 2016, 2012; Charoensukmongkol, 2014; Lee & Lee, 2018, 2020; Leftheriotis & Giannakos, 2014; Moqbel et al., 2013). Lee and Lee (2020) sought to determine how the usage of SNSs such as Facebook and KakaoTalk in the workplace affected individual job performance. The results yielded in this study suggested that SNS usage enhanced job performance through mediating variables such as organizational commitment and social capital (Ellison et al., 2007; Lee & Lee, 2020; Moqbel et al., 2013). The researchers in this study posit that the social relationships developed between colleagues within the workplace are solidified through SNSs may improve organizational commitment, as social interaction may act as a resource to employees, enhancing their attachment to the company (Lee & Lee, 2020; Moqbel et al., 2013).

In addition, many use the power of social media for communicating health information and seeking support (Fox & Duggan, 2013; Lu et al., 2020). Many individuals struggling with mental health issues such as depression are joining online communities to obtain health information and provide social support for each other to fight against the difficult symptoms often associated with depression (Fox & Duggan, 2013; Lu et al., 2020). As online depression communities have become increasingly recognized as encouraging platforms for communication about depression (Hawn, 2009), Lu et al. (2020) sought to discover whether usage of online community helped improve

depression outcomes. In analyzing over 400,000 social media posts, the researchers discovered that the sense of shared identity, trust, and informational and emotional support yield extremely positive effects on depression (Lu et al., 2020). Lu et al. (2020) concluded that the online health community may be extremely beneficial for users struggling from symptoms of depression and may help to improve their mental health.

History and Description of Facebook

History of Facebook

On February 4, 2004, a social networking site (SNS) known as thefacebook.com became available for students' use at Harvard University (Brügger, 2015; Carlson, 2010). This website made it possible for undergraduates to create a personal profile page with information about themselves, their lives, and interests to connect with other students (Brügger, 2015; Tsotsis, 2011). The only requirements for creating a profile on thefacebook were an email address ending in "Harvard.edu" and students had to be above 18 years old (Brügger, 2015; Carlson, 2010). At its inception, thefacebook referred to itself as "an online directory that connects people through social networks at colleges and universities" (Brügger, 2015, p. 2). At this time in 2004, organizations and businesses could not create profiles or even access the site (Brügger, 2015). Mark Zuckerberg, a 19-year-old Harvard University student, was the mastermind behind thefacebook, developing and running the site from his dorm room (Brügger, 2015; Markoff, 2007). Besides Zuckerberg, thefacebook team was comprised of Eduardo Saverin, Dustin Moskovitz, Andrew McCollum, and Chris Hughes, all of whom possessed various strengths and brought different assets to the social media development squadron (Brügger, 2015; Carlson, 2010). Thefacebook was an infectious disease, spreading

quickly to surrounding universities such as Stanford, Columbia, Yale, New York University, MIT, Cornell, and others (Brügger, 2015; Helmond et al., 2019). By May of 2005, thefacebook was available to over 800 U.S. universities and changed its name to Facebook during the Fall (Brügger, 2015; Carlson, 2010). By December of 2005, Facebook had over 6 million users (Brügger, 2015; Kirkpatrick, 2012). Now, Facebook accounts for over 7% of all U.S. web traffic (Dougherty, 2010).

Description of Facebook

This section discusses the mechanics of Facebook including its features, methods of generating revenue, approaches to fostering social connectedness, and expansion into everyday life.

Profiles, Status Updates, and Networks of Friends

The two main elements comprising Facebook are the personal profiles and the networks (Brügger, 2015; Goggin, 2014). Personal profiles on Facebook are linked to an individual person and are visible to all Facebook users depending on one's personal privacy settings (Brügger, 2015; Goggin, 2014). A user's personal profile usually includes contact information, relationship status, religious affiliation, political views, favorite movies, books, films, educational information, and a photo of oneself (Brügger, 2015; Markoff, 2007). By 2006, users were able to create new categories of Facebook pages for themselves, apart from personal profile pages (Brügger, 2015; Kirkpatrick, 2012). With this momentous development to the site, profiles for politicians, networks, restaurants, businesses, organizations, advocates, musicians, film companies, and more all joined this rapidly growing behemoth known as Facebook (Brügger, 2015; Vaidhyathan, 2018). By September of 2007, it became possible to search among the

entire Facebook database for a certain user, even if they were not in a person's "network" of friends (Brügger, 2015; Markoff, 2007).

Another key component of Facebook is its status update feature (Brügger, 2015). The news feed page allows users to post updates about what they are doing currently without having to change profile information and view friends' status updates in a linear fashion (Brügger, 2015). In 2006, Facebook expanded its user base greatly by allowing access to anyone over the age of 13 with a valid email address (Brown, 2008).

Marketplace and Viral Advertising

During the early years of Facebook, advertisements in banner form were the only type of commercial activity on the site (Brügger, 2015; Zywicki & Danowski, 2008). The gifts feature was introduced in 2007, which allowed Facebook users the option of buying gifts for their friends and supporting various charitable causes such as cancer research (Brügger, 2015; Zywicki & Danowski, 2008). Later in 2007, the marketplace was launched, making possible the ability for users to advertise things that they wanted to buy, sell, or trade with friends and other Facebook consumers (Brügger, 2015; Zywicki & Danowski, 2008). As Facebook continued to develop in late 2007, the Facebook Ads service was launched (Brügger, 2015; Zywicki & Danowski, 2008). This enabled companies to set up a corporate or product site on Facebook which would create direct contact with Facebook users who could "like" and "follow" these pages, spreading businesses' advertising messages virally throughout the entire site (Brügger, 2015).

Facebook Outside the Web

Although originally designed as solely a web-based platform, as smart phone technology rapidly developed, the Facebook organization knew they would need to

expand into the mobile market (Brügger, 2015). By 2007, Facebook Mobile had launched, thus making it possible for users to communicate with Facebook via text message as well as upload photos and share status updates through their mobile application (Brügger, 2015). The development of Facebook mobile drastically increased the number of users and allowed greater accessibility for existing consumers (Brügger, 2015).

Implications

Facebook Success

In the 17 years since Facebook's commencement, its database has grown to over one billion active users (Caers et al., 2013). The 21st century has brought about more ways than ever before to connect with others, and sites such as Facebook have created myriads of innovate methods for meeting and connecting with new people as well as old friends, all while growing one's ever-growing circle of connections (Corbett, 2009; Mauri et al., 2011). In essence, Facebook has made the world smaller and has allowed for more human interaction than has ever before in history (Lampe et al., 2006; Wilson et al., 2012). This begs the question of why Facebook has had such phenomenal success and groundbreaking levels of distribution for nearly 2 decades. Mauri et al. (2011) found that the successful spread of SNSs such as Facebook may be associated with a specific positive affective state that Facebook users experience when using their SNS account (Joinson, 2008).

Existing research has demonstrated that although SNSs can have both positive and negative effects on the user (Lee & Lee, 2020; Lu et al., 2020; Mou & Shen, 2018; Tromholt, 2016), the staggering amount of usage may be attributed to the positive

experiences that result from use (Mauri et al., 2011). Prior to their study, Italian researchers found that very few studies had attempted to identify which particular aspects of social networking experiences make them so successful (Mauri et al., 2011).

Therefore, these researchers attempted to identify the affective experiences evoked by SNSs such as Facebook, specifically through the presence of psychophysiological patterns (Mauri et al., 2011; Ramirez et al., 2002). By recording skin conductance, blood volume pulse, electroencephalogram, electromyography, respiratory activity and pupil dilation in their sample, the researchers were able to measure the biological signals indicating high positive valence and high states of arousal associated with positive affective states (Mauri et al., 2011). The conclusion drawn from this study was that the success of SNS sites such as Facebook may be attributed to the positive emotional experiences that they elicit from users (Mauri et al., 2011).

Existing Research on Facebook

The innovation and rapid spread of Facebook has undoubtedly been one of the most noteworthy and historic social trends of the past decade, serving over 1 billion regular users by the end of 2012 (Caers et al., 2013). Eighty percent of Facebook users reside outside of the United States and its services are available in over 70 languages, thus classifying it as a global platform (Caers et al., 2013; Stroud, 2008). Due to its looming presence in most individuals' lives, it is no surprise that researchers from diverse fields of study have focused much of their time and energy on its study (Aimeur et al., 2010; Back et al., 2010; Caers et al., 2013). Researchers have discovered a considerable amount of existing research on user personality, why they joined, how they build networks, and how they interact; and on how organizations may act on, and benefit from

Facebook, but various literature gaps still exist (Caers et al., 2013; Valenzuela et al., 2009). This analysis revealed that although many interesting topics and fields of study have been addressed, much of the existing work has been limited to specific settings and populations, leaving room for research in many areas (Caers et al., 2013). Despite the research on Facebook growing at a rapid pace, studies that emphasize various settings, countries, and demographics are still needed (Caers et al., 2013; Zywicki & Danowski, 2008).

As Facebook continues to have its meteoric rise, currently accounting for over 7.07% of all U.S. web traffic and supporting over four billion pieces of shared content per day, social scientists are rapidly turning their attention to this social networking giant and assessing its effects on the social life of the average SNS user (Rusli, 2012; Wilson et al., 2012). The explosion of Facebook into the individual's life has offered social scientists an unprecedented opportunity to observe and record human behavior in a manner never seen (Kreutz, 2009; Tsotsis, 2011; Wilson et al., 2012). Various researchers have assessed and analyzed much of the existing research on Facebook in an attempt to create a concise, coherent summary of the current findings but were unable to achieve this goal due to the diverse perspectives and fragmented perspectives found in the literature (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Graham et al., 2011; Wilson et al., 2012). Wilson et al. (2012) emphasized that although there has been substantial progress toward analyzing and classifying behavior on SNSs such as Facebook, there is a great deal of variability in the research quality. Individuals are engaging with the Internet in a much more socially interactive manner, illustrating a major shift in its role on daily life that researchers are attempting to stay ahead of (Lampe et al., 2006; Wilson et al., 2012). Further research on Facebook needs to

expand the existing base of knowledge on personality and relational experiences (Caers et al., 2013), which is what this current study intends to do.

Facebook Usage and the Individual

Self-Esteem

Facebook is a platform that emphasizes the exchange of information between users as well as the facilitation of new relationships and the maintaining of existing ones (Błachnio et al., 2016). Thusly, Facebook has had a tremendous impact on social life since its inception in 2004 (Błachnio et al., 2016). As the number of active Facebook users has skyrocketed in recent years, problems associated with excessive use and addiction have become more and more prevalent (Błachnio et al., 2016). Much of the recent research on Facebook has focused on the potential connection between social networking and mental health issues (Błachnio et al., 2016). One of the main focuses of current research is the possible link between Facebook usage and self-esteem (Błachnio et al., 2016). Using a cross-sectional study on their sample of 381 regular Facebook users along with various life satisfaction and self-esteem scales, Błachnio et al. (2016) found that Facebook users who fell into the “addicted” or “intensive” usage categories differed significantly from those who fell into the “ordinary” usage classification. Excessive Facebook usage was positively correlated to lower self-esteem as well as lower overall life satisfaction (Armstrong et al., 2000; Bergagna & Tartaglia, 2018; Błachnio et al., 2016; Grieve et al., 2020).

Research has shown that although people usually use SNSs such as Facebook to present their ideal version of themselves, it is not clear whether it actually brings forth the best self of its users (Amichai-Hamburger, 2007, 2013; Isaranon, 2019). Multiple studies

have sought to discover whether Facebook would help its users feel their best and boost their self-esteem levels through the affirmation of their ideal selves (Isaranon, 2019; Kim & Lee, 2011; Lee-Won et al., 2014). Existing research has demonstrated that certain activities on Facebook such as self-description may help users to feel as though they are constructing and presenting their ideal selves (Isaranon, 2019; Malik et al., 2016; Tosun, 2012). Additionally, Facebook's privacy settings and information filtering systems appear to elicit positive interactions from users, thus creating an expectation of positive feedback from others (Isaranon, 2019; Zhao et al., 2008). This process fulfills the criteria for behavioral affirmation, suggesting that affirmation from others is crucial for moving toward one's perceived ideal self (Isaranon, 2019; Lin et al., 2014). Applying this principle to Facebook implies that as people act out of their ideal Facebook self, they will attain positive affirmation in return (Isaranon, 2019; Kumashiro et al., 2006).

Drawing from the current research regarding behavioral affirmation, self-presentation, and mental health concerns such as low self-esteem, Isaranon (2019) sought to examine whether Facebook can indeed provide the desired affirmation of the ideal self, providing congruence between the actual and ideal versions of oneself. It was hypothesized that an intersection between the actual and ideal self may increase Facebook users' self-esteem as they feel a sense of earned self-worth through having their affirmation goals met (Isaranon, 2019; Kim & Lee, 2011). The results of this study indicated that as Facebook affirmation increased, so did users' self-esteem (Isaranon, 2019). The indirect effect of affirmation from Facebook was also more prominent among moderate users of the SNS than light users and moderate users of Facebook reported

having increased levels of self-esteem resulting from the congruence between actual and ideal self (Isaranon, 2019).

In a research study examining Romanian graduate students, the correlation between online activity and self-esteem was examined (ȘTEFĂNIȚĂ et al., 2018). The article sought to further the existing research on the effects of Facebook usage on self-esteem as many previously completed studies suggest a positive correlation between the two (ȘTEFĂNIȚĂ et al., 2018). The researchers hypothesized that high levels of engagement on SNSs such as Facebook are often associated with elevated levels of self-disclosure, usually leading to the user harshly comparing themselves to others and thusly producing negative feelings about the self (ȘTEFĂNIȚĂ et al., 2018). Through a cohesive and comprehensive literature review, the researchers concluded that Facebook simply intensifies already-present traits and feelings rather than bringing about solutions or remedies (ȘTEFĂNIȚĂ et al., 2018). The literature review did reveal how Facebook can be used as a remedy for feelings of loneliness through communication with others (ȘTEFĂNIȚĂ et al., 2018). The Facebook ecosystem actively encourages social comparisons, as reflected in self-assessments found in the existing literature (ȘTEFĂNIȚĂ et al., 2018). The benefits of Facebook were stated to be most useful for individuals who already possess medium to high levels of self-esteem, as those with low levels may find that their perceived lack of shareable significant life achievements could lead to increased fears of rejection, further social comparisons, and negative self-image outcomes (ȘTEFĂNIȚĂ et al., 2018). The researchers concluded that short periods of time spent on Facebook may be beneficial in fulfilling social needs and longer periods will more likely lead to negative consequences (ȘTEFĂNIȚĂ et al., 2018).

One study highlighted how individuals with mental health problems may use SNSs to help in managing their mental well-being by allowing self-expression and communication with others who may have similar experiences (Berry et al., 2018). The results yielded in this study indicated that excessive social media use predicted low mood and increased paranoia as did posting about one's feelings and venting on social media (Berry et al., 2018). Analysis of the data also revealed that one's perceived low social rank and consuming social media predicted low mood and self-esteem paired with high levels of paranoia (Berry et al., 2018). One noteworthy result from this study was that the impact of social media use did not differ between participants with and without psychosis, thus illustrating the potency of SNSs such as Facebook (Berry et al., 2018).

Depression

Depression is extremely prevalent in the United States and its prevalence is increasing (Kessler et al., 2005). At its current escalating rate, depression is predicted to become the leading cause of disabilities in first-world countries by the year 2030 (Mathers & Loncar, 2006). Existing research has highlighted the association between internet addiction, defined as using the internet to an excessive degree, and depressive symptoms among young and older adults (Morrison & Gore, 2010). A previous analysis of previously posted status updates from 200 college students, which are often used as a tool for divulging information to Facebook friends, found 25% of the statuses contained evidence of depressive symptoms some time over the previous year (Moreno et al., 2011). Another study found that across 425 Facebook users, individuals who had possessed a Facebook account over a longer period (i.e., for several years) tended to perceive others as being happier and that life was unfair (Chou & Edge, 2012). Steers et

al. (2014) built on this existing research by examining how time on Facebook was related to tendency to compare one's life to others. The researchers hypothesized that if individuals regularly portray themselves as being happier than they are, then the perceptions of happiness and life satisfaction of one's Facebook friends are more than likely to be distorted (Steers et al., 2014). Through two different studies examining time spent on Facebook and depressive symptoms among males and females, evidence of increased depression following long periods of time spent on Facebook was yielded (Steers et al., 2014). Steers et al. (2014) theorized that this was due to an increased likelihood of comparing oneself to others as time spent on Facebook increased.

Social media usage among young adult populations has exponentially increased within the last decade (Lin et al., 2016). Lin et al. (2016) surveyed over 1,700 young adults regarding their social media usage and depression, yielding results in support of their hypothesis that increased social media use is associated with elevated levels of depression. Through four separate meta-analyses examining time spent on SNSs, SNS checking frequency, and general and upwards social comparisons on SNS, Yoon et al. (2019) discovered over 2,300 scholarly articles highlighting the association between greater time spent on SNSs and higher levels of depression as well as greater levels of social comparison also leading to elevated feelings of depression (Appel et al., 2016; Frost & Rickwood, 2017; Khoo & Yang, 2020; Steers et al., 2014; Tosun & Kaşdarma, 2020; Vahedi & Zannella, 2021). Among older adult populations (aged 60 years and above), SNS usage can be helpful in fostering social support and intergenerational relationships (Nam, 2019; Wu & Chiou, 2020; Zhang et al., 2021). Among 153 Taiwanese adults surveyed, higher levels of depression were found in those who had a

perceived lack of social support (Wu & Chiou, 2020). Among the older adults who used social media, perceived themselves as having high levels of social support, and had several intergenerational friendships, depressive symptoms were much less frequent (Wu & Chiou, 2020). As highlighted in previous literature, depressive symptoms are highly prevalent among younger populations (Scherr & Brunet, 2017). Scherr and Brunet (2017) found that as depressive tendencies among young adults increased, there was a marked increase in frequency of posting status updates on Facebook, usually for negative purposes. From this study, it can be inferred that young adults may seek refuge from depressive symptoms through SNSs such as Facebook but often do not find respite.

Body Image

In Western culture, the internet is the most common form of media for young women (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015). On the internet, SNSs such as Facebook are often used more than any other website (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015). As the popularity of social media has increased, its association with women's body image concerns has become cause for alarm among researchers (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015). This is of particular concern due to the fact that body dissatisfaction is one of the most prevalent factors in the development of eating disorders in women (Stice, 2002). Fardouly and Vartanian (2015) sought to examine the relationship between Facebook usage and body image concerns among 227 female university students through Facebook usage and physical appearance comparison scales. The results yielded from this study presented a positive correlation between Facebook usage and body image concerns among young women, mediated by comparison of appearance to close friends as well as distant peers, and by upward comparisons (i.e., judging one's own appearance to be worse) to distant

peers and celebrities (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015). From this research, the conclusion can be drawn that as young women increase their average amount of time spent on Facebook, their concerns for their body image may increase as they compare their physical appearance to others more frequently (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015). Other existing literature suggests that rather than the total amount of time spent on Facebook being the source of increased self-objectification and weight dissatisfaction, it is instead the amount of Facebook time dedicated to photo activity producing increased body dissatisfaction among female populations (Meier & Gray, 2014). In other words, as young women spend more time engaging with Facebook photo applications, their rates of body dissatisfaction increase exponentially (Meier & Gray, 2014).

Many studies regarding body dissatisfaction and SNS usage focus solely on women despite the fact that many media sources tend to depict idealized and unrealistic projections of men and women (Andersen & DiDomenico, 1992; Fox et al., 1994; Garner et al., 1980; Kross et al., 2013; Nemeroff et al., 1994; Wiseman et al., 1992). One study sought to expand the existing literature on this subject by examining the relationships between young women's and men's (aged 18–25) social media usage and their respective body image attitudes—namely the desire for thinness and the desire for muscularity (Kim & Chock, 2015). Contrary to popular belief, simple exposure to social media was not correlated with body image concerns (Kim & Chock, 2015). Conversely, online social grooming behaviors such as viewing and commenting on friends' profiles was significantly correlated with the drive for thinness among the sample (Kim & Chock, 2015). This study highlights how intoxicating it can be for young people to view idealized images of others and the manner in which the time spent viewing those subjects

can translate to poor body image and physical dissatisfaction with oneself (Kim & Chock, 2015). In another 2015 study, Fardouly et al. sought to expand their previous research on Facebook and body image among women through the use of a magazine website.

Participants were randomly assigned to spend 10 minutes browsing either their personal Facebook account or a magazine website containing numerous images of attractive women (Fardouly et al., 2015). Upon completion of their time, participants completed measures of mood, body dissatisfaction, and appearance discrepancies (Fardouly et al., 2015). The results of this study indicated that those who spent more time on Facebook reported being in a more negative mood than those who spent time on the magazine website (Fardouly et al., 2015). Additionally, women who scored highly on the appearance comparison tendency scale reported more dissatisfaction with themselves after exposure to Facebook than the magazine website (Fardouly et al., 2015). Even when idealized images from SNSs such as Facebook offered disclaimer comments (informs viewers when images have been digitally altered) alongside the photos, no impact was found on women's mood (Fardouly & Holland, 2018). In fact, when women viewed idealized images on Facebook accompanied by disclaimer labels from the user who posted them, a less positive impression of the original poster was formed (Fardouly & Holland, 2018). These results indicate that disclaimer labels or comments are likely ineffective at reducing women's body dissatisfaction (Fardouly & Holland, 2018). In essence, social media allows its users to manage others' impressions of them and present themselves in as favorable of a manner as possible (Chou & Edge, 2012).

Life Satisfaction

As highlighted previously regarding existing research on Facebook use and self-esteem, life satisfaction appears to be heavily mediated by SNS use as well, especially among those who fall into the category of intensive use (Błachnio et al., 2016). Existing literature supports the hypothesis that levels of life satisfaction are lowest among users classified as addicted to Facebook (Błachnio et al., 2016). This study also illustrated that when a user becomes addicted to Facebook, they no longer derive pleasure or satisfaction from usage and thus, experience lower levels of life satisfaction (Błachnio et al., 2016). Most Facebook users tend to attribute the positive content they view to others' personality, rather than the situational factors at play within each post, especially for individuals they do not know personally (Chou & Edge, 2012). Among young adult populations, especially undergraduates, there is an increased likelihood of Facebook changing existing perceptions of others' lives (Chou & Edge, 2012). In surveying over 400 undergraduate students, Chou and Edge (2012) discovered that individuals who have used Facebook for a longer period of time agreed that others were happier and believed life was unfair. Additionally, undergraduates who spent more time on Facebook each week felt as though most people had better lives (Chou & Edge, 2012). Within many young adult populations, the common perception is that the more Facebook friends one has, the greater their social standing will be (Ellison et al., 2007). Ironically, the research from Chou and Edge (2012) yielded the result that when undergraduates' Facebook profiles included more people whom they did not personally know as "friends," students reported increased beliefs that others possessed better lives. Additionally, having more

Facebook “friends” does not boost Facebook users’ perceived life satisfaction rates, either (Stieger, 2019).

In comparing Facebook and non-Facebook users, there is not a significantly higher rate of life satisfaction among avid users, contrary to popular belief (Kross et al., 2013; Stieger, 2019). Much of the existing research plainly points to the fact that Facebook usage is consistently associated with lower levels of life satisfaction across many different samples and populations (Stieger, 2019). Positive effects of having a Facebook account or even having an increased number of Facebook friends has yet to be found in the existing literature (Appel et al., 2016; Stieger, 2019; Verduyn et al., 2015).

Humans are social creatures and social media taps into the innate desire for connections with one another (Stieger, 2019). Emerging research is continually revealing how time spent online, particularly on SNSs such as Facebook, is not sufficient in satisfying the social needs of mankind (Stieger, 2019). Social contact is intended to facilitate life satisfaction, which is why increased numbers of close “offline” friends are positively associated with higher levels of life satisfaction and self-esteem (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Stieger, 2019). Another crucial factor to highlight in discussing the relationship between Facebook usage and life satisfaction is envy (Krasnova et al., 2013). Through over-exposure to social information on an SNS such as Facebook, users can often experience feelings of envy, thus leading to damaged well-being and poor levels of life satisfaction (Krasnova et al., 2013). Previous research has highlighted the negative impact that envy may have on frustration, mental suffering, and even depression (Krasnova et al., 2013). Existing research has revealed how passive following (when users browse their News Feed, click on ‘stories,’ follow communication of their friends,

or proactively examine profiles of others) on Facebook can trigger a variety of unpleasant emotions from users; one of the most common being envy of other users' lives (Krasnova et al., 2013). As levels of envy increase among Facebook users, perceived life satisfaction steadily decreases (Krasnova et al., 2013).

Another area of the individual's psyche that Facebook usage impacts are with empathic social skills (Chan, 2014). Because networking sites such as Facebook are advertised as being social experiences, one common misconception is that usage will enhance users' interpersonal competence, especially within the realm of empathetic social skills (Chan, 2014). Chan (2014) found that although high levels of empathetic social skills are positively associated with life satisfaction, high levels of Facebook activity mainly act as a suppressant. Analysis of the current research reveals that average Facebook usage produces undesirable effects where users high in extroversion and neuroticism may displace offline social connections to online ones, thus resulting in lower levels of life satisfaction (Chan, 2014; Errasti et al., 2017; Kopiś-Posiej et al., 2021; Wa, 2020).

Mood

Another result yielded from Berry et al. (2018) was the drastic reduction in mood levels following social media usage. Additionally, SNSs such as Facebook allow individuals to attract social support, seek validation from others, and enhance their mood (Abbasi & Drouin, 2019). Due to these positive reinforcers that SNSs offer, highly neurotic individuals may find themselves turning to these platforms frequently enough to parallel behaviors of addiction (Abbasi & Drouin, 2019). Abbasi and Drouin (2019) found that because individuals high in neuroticism are already inclined toward higher

levels of negative affect, they may also be more inclined toward SNS addiction, which would deteriorate their mood further (Abbasi & Drouin, 2019). Factors such as social overload, envy, jealousy, and relationship dissatisfaction are all hypothesized as contributors to mood deterioration among neurotic individuals using SNSs.

The emerging adult population, defined as ages 18–29 (Arnett, 2000), currently uses social media sites such as Facebook ravenously (Yuen et al., 2019). As of 2015, 90% of emerging adults used some form of social media (Perrin, 2015) and the usage of Facebook within this population has received significant empirical attention (Assunção et al., 2017; Ellison et al., 2007; Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015; Fardouly et al., 2015; Galica et al., 2017; Lin et al., 2016; McLaughlin et al., 2002; Pempek et al., 2009; Perrin, 2015; Wilson et al., 2012; Yuen et al., 2019). Within individuals who only use one social media site, Facebook was the first choice for 79%, displaying its colossal vice grip on the interest of the population (Duggan et al., 2015). Many studies have highlighted the negative psychological and physiological consequences of using SNSs such as Facebook and research aimed at emerging adults and their Facebook use continues to emerge (Abbasi et al., 2019; Abbasi & Drouin, 2019; Berry et al., 2018; Błachnio et al., 2016; Chan, 2014; Chou & Edge, 2012; Clayton et al., 2013; Elphinston & Noller, 2011, Farrugia, 2013; Galica et al., 2017; Guinta & John, 2018; Kim & Chock, 2015; McLaughlin et al., 2002; Morrison & Gore, 2010; Yuen et al., 2019). Facebook actively affects one's emotional state (Sagioglou & Greitemeyer, 2014). Emerging evidence and research consistently support the idea that the longer people are active on Facebook, the more negative their mood is afterwards (Sagioglou & Greitemeyer, 2014). Most Facebook users feel as though they do not engage in any meaningful activity during their

time on the SNS, thus leading to a deterioration of mood (Sagioglou & Greitemeyer, 2014). Many Facebook users commit an affective forecasting error, wherein they expect to feel an uplifting of their mood after using Facebook whereas, instead, they feel worse (Sagioglou & Greitemeyer, 2014).

Facebook Usage and Relationships

Marriage

With over 2.7 billion users worldwide, the Facebook behemoth is used by nearly every demographic and social stratum imaginable (Tankovska, 2021). Married individuals are no exception to this bewildering statistic. Since the advent of Facebook in the early 2000s, 7% of Americans have been able to find love on SNSs (Ghose, 2014). As the number of Facebook users, including married individuals, steadily and reliably increases daily, researchers have increasingly wondered how Facebook usage affects marriages worldwide. One survey of 205 Facebook users aged 18–82 was conducted via a 16-question online survey to examine whether high levels of Facebook usage predicted negative relationship outcomes as compared to those with lower use (Clayton et al., 2013). The results of this study indicated that high levels of Facebook usage are associated with negative relationship outcomes (e.g., breakup/divorce, emotional cheating, and physical cheating), especially among couples who have been in relationships for 3 years or less (Clayton et al., 2013).

SNS addiction, a subtype of internet addiction, has shown a positive relationship with a variety of negative symptoms and mental health issues (Abbasi & Drouin, 2019; Błachnio et al., 2016). Increased research on Facebook addiction and its effect on marriages has continued to blossom within the last decade (Acedera & Yeoh, 2018;

Carter, 2016, 2018; Clayton et al., 2013; Gift, 2021). One hundred and thirty-eight cohabitating married Facebook users residing in the United States participated in an online survey assessing marital dissatisfaction, commitment, and Facebook addiction to ascertain whether correlations between addictive Facebook use and marital dissatisfaction exist (Abbasi et al., 2019). Some of the factors assessed in this study were loss of love and emotional disengagement, among others (Abbasi et al., 2019). Facebook addiction and marital dissatisfaction were revealed to be positively correlated even after controlling for relationship commitment (Abbasi et al., 2019). Relationship commitment was shown to weaken the association between Facebook addiction and marital disaffection, as higher levels are hypothesized to protect against negative relationship outcomes associated with problematic Facebook usage (Abbasi et al., 2019). Addictive Facebook behaviors in marital relationships are hypothesized to be problematic due to time displacement, availability of alternative partners, and idealization of other's relationships (Abbasi et al., 2019). Addictive Facebook behaviors have been linked to conflict, dissatisfaction, and emotional disengagement from one's partner (Abbasi et al., 2019).

Relationship satisfaction is described as an individual's opinion of the contentment, joy, and fulfillment that they receive from their relationship (Hawkins, 1968). Demircioğlu and Köse (2018) found that attachment styles, rejection sensitivity, and the Dark Triad personality traits (i.e., Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy) all play a role in relationship satisfaction, especially within marriages. Fearful attachment styles and relational dissatisfaction have been positively linked with social media addiction and rejection sensitivity and psychopathy also strengthen the likelihood of an individual to experience the fearful attachment style (Demircioğlu &

Köse, 2018). As young people increase their usage of SNSs such as Facebook, emerging research has revealed how this can add new layers of complication to romantic relationships, even producing increased levels of jealousy (Clayton et al., 2013; Elphinston & Noller, 2011). A group of over 300 Australian individuals aged 18 to 25 years all of whom were either dating (for over 1 year) or married were administered questionnaires regarding their Facebook usage, romantic jealousy, and relational satisfaction (Elphinston & Noller, 2011). The results were overwhelmingly in support of the idea that Facebook dependency was linked to increased dissatisfaction in relationships through jealousy as well as scrutinizing behaviors (Elphinston & Noller, 2011). The existing research continues to point to the fact that Facebook is often a breeding ground for jealousy and possessive behaviors and furthermore, individuals that possess addictive behaviors increase the likelihood of relationship dissatisfaction (Elphinston & Noller, 2011; Muise et al., 2009). Similar to individuals who may struggle with substance abuse behaviors such as alcoholism or drug addiction, high levels of involvement on Facebook may produce increased relational impediments such as possessiveness or unhappiness (Elphinston & Noller, 2011; Halford & Osgarby, 1993). As young adults attempt to sustain their romantic relationships, the correlations between addiction to SNSs such as Facebook and its effect on romantic possessiveness and overall relationship dissatisfaction merit additional research (Elphinston & Noller, 2011). Despite the fact that feeling socially connected in one's world increases psychological welfare within young adults, if a dependence on Facebook for societal connectedness is developed, there is a significantly increased chance of negative impact on relationship satisfaction (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

SNSs such as Facebook have revolutionized the manner in which couples initiate and develop their romantic relationships (Farrugia, 2013). Sites such as Facebook provide an alternative for relationship development for individuals who struggle to build connections in an in-person environment while simultaneously increasing risks of romantic jealousy (Farrugia, 2013). Individuals who are married and report lower levels of marital satisfaction are more likely to participate in infidelity-related behaviors on SNSs (McDaniel et al., 2017). Higher levels of Facebook usage have been linked to lower levels of marital satisfaction and higher rates of divorce (Valenzuela et al., 2014). The emerging research has demonstrated that within marital relationships that are unhappy and feel unfulfilled for the individuals within, SNSs such as Facebook can often offer opportunities for cheating behaviors that may potentially erode the stability of the relationship (McDaniel et al., 2017; Valenzuela et al., 2014). In addition, infidelity-related behaviors on social media are positively correlated with anxious and avoidant attachment styles among married couples, both of which are strong predictors of offline affairs (McDaniel et al., 2017; Russell et al., 2013).

Friendship

A great deal of empirically based research has linked social relationships with health (House et al., 1988). In fact, much research has linked poor friendship quantities and qualities with increased risk of death (House et al., 1988). When individuals are socially isolated, they have lower qualities of health, poorer psychological well-being, and higher levels of loneliness (House et al., 1988). As social media usage has climbed drastically within the last decade, the manner in which friendships are cultivated and maintained has also changed. SNSs such as Facebook not only impact romantic

relationships but social connections such as friendships as well (Ellison et al., 2011; Sutcliffe et al., 2018). SNSs such as Facebook are often used by individuals to seek social support, and the perceived intensity of the support depends largely on the intensity of the friendships and social connections (Sutcliffe et al., 2018). Past studies have also suggested that the levels of social support are closely related to perceived emotional closeness within social relationships (Sutcliffe et al., 2018). Additionally, emerging research has suggested that intensity of social media use is closely related to the level of closeness in relationships (Ellison et al., 2011; Lampe et al., 2006; Sutcliffe et al., 2018). According to the Social Brain Hypothesis, individuals naturally form smaller groups of close friends as well as larger groups of good friends and acquaintances (Dunbar, 1998). The current research on friendships and social networks has revealed that there are usually varying degrees of intensity and emotional closeness within (Oswald et al., 2004). Social activities conducted offline have a positive association with the size of one's core support group and how much satisfaction they derive from it (Sutcliffe et al., 2018). Sutcliffe et al. (2018) also revealed that time spent on social media was positively correlated with social satisfaction as well as the size of one's total social network. These two pieces of data, although contradictory, certainly merit additional research. In addition, Sutcliffe et al. (2018) discovered that the total number of online "friends" on SNSs such as Facebook was positively related to the satisfaction that one received from their social group. Groups of close friends have been found to be more intimately involved with offline social activities while social media usage largely affected the group of acquaintances, thus providing further support for the idea that social media use affects both online and offline relationships (Sutcliffe et al., 2018).

Seymour (2019) explored the impact that Facebook has on undergraduates, one of the largest demographics on Facebook. The findings indicated that male students reported low levels of issues caused by social media while females reported frequent issues such as relationship termination, ending communication with certain friends, and social and romantic relationship problems (Seymour, 2019). In addition, students who indicated that they did not want to make their lives appear happier on Facebook than it really is had the lowest levels of life problems caused by Facebook usage (Seymour, 2019).

Romantic Nonmarital Relationships

The internet and SNSs have continued to increasingly impact romantic relationships as technology has advanced (Helsper & Whitty, 2010). Within nonmarital romantic relationships, couples are usually found to have alike ideas about what internet behaviors were considered to be both acceptable and unacceptable (Helsper & Whitty, 2010). Additionally, according to Helsper and Whitty (2010), partners usually will confront their significant others about behaviors on SNSs that they are not comfortable with. The emerging research has also demonstrated that since the advent of the internet and especially SNSs, the monitoring of partner internet behaviors, especially with some form of technological tool, has greatly increased (Helsper & Whitty, 2010). Within intimate nonmarital relationships, the impact of Facebook has largely to do with the form of usage rather than just the frequency and duration (Whiteside et al., 2018). Whiteside et al. (2018) highlighted four kinds of Facebook users: disconnectors, light users, heavy users, and connectors. Individuals identified as connectors primarily use Facebook for connecting with family and friends, as well as their peers and romantic partners (Whiteside et al., 2018). On the other hand, heavy users of Facebook reported harmful

effects on their romantic nonmarital relationships (Whiteside et al., 2018). Interestingly, those who live alone or on a low income reported higher levels of relationship dissatisfaction and primarily used social media for connection with others (Whiteside et al., 2018).

In the 21st century, Facebook is largely used for used for developing and maintaining relationships, especially those of a romantic nature (Seidman et al., 2019). SNS usage impacts feelings of connections on an intimately deep level (Seidman et al., 2019; Sheldon et al., 2011). Some studies have illustrated that frequent Facebook use is associated with feeling as though one's relational needs are being met while also often feeling as though they are not being satisfied (Seidman et al., 2019; Sheldon et al., 2011). As technology has continued to advance in recent decades, more individuals are relying on technology (more specifically, SNSs such as Facebook) to increase feelings of belonging and meet the essential human need for relational connection (Seidman et al., 2019). Displaying one's relationship publicly on Facebook has been correlated with higher relationship satisfaction and displaying excessive expressions of affection online (more so than normally displayed offline) is associated with lower levels of satisfaction (Seidman et al., 2019). Within young adult populations, specifically college students, one of the main motivations for using Facebook is relationship maintenance (Dainton, 2013). One revealing result from emerging research has suggested that although Facebook is used in maintaining romantic relationships, it may not be the most effective manner with which to do so as compared to other social means (Dainton, 2013). Ellison et al. (2007) found that Facebook was used more by friends rather than romantic partners and this research was furthered by studies suggesting that friends used SNSs more than romantic

nonmarital partners (Houser et al., 2012). Facebook has further exacerbated the idea that when individuals are in love, their identities merge with one another's, often to the point of feeling like their partner is a part of them (Saslow et al., 2013). Even the minute details of relationships have been impacted by SNSs such as Facebook (Saslow et al., 2013). For example, emerging research has suggested that increased feelings of relationship satisfaction are linked to posting photos of oneself and the relationship partner on Facebook (Saslow et al., 2013). Saslow et al. (2013) hypothesized that the reason for this increase in relationship satisfaction due to posting dyadic profile pictures is due to the perceived correlation between relational strength and the quantity of dyadic material posted on Facebook.

Excessive engagement with SNSs such as Facebook can often lead to feelings of disengagement within non-marital romantic relationships (Saeed Abbasi, 2018). Disengagement within romantic relationships is linked to relationship volatility (Saeed Abbasi, 2018). With the ever-growing age of social media comes a huge influx in manners of meeting and connecting with new people. Saeed Abbasi (2018) found that the use of SNSs such as Facebook creates opportunities for individuals to develop virtual relationships which may even turn into potential romantic alternatives. Thusly, as Facebook usage increases and individuals begin to assess for romantic alternatives, the primary relationship may be weakened (Saeed Abbasi, 2018). Roberts and David (2016) state bluntly in their research that romantic relationships are under attack. The well-known statistic that 40%–50% of marriages end in divorce may sound familiar but even intact nonmarital relationships are characterized by high levels of relationship dissatisfaction from either one or both partners (Ahlstrom et al., 2012; Roberts & David,

2016). Using one's cell phone to access social networking applications such as Facebook while in the presence of a romantic partner has also been linked to higher levels of relationship dissatisfaction (Roberts & David, 2016). Partner phubbing is the "extent to which an individual uses or is distracted by his/her cell phone while in the company of his/her relationship partner" (Roberts & David, 2016, p. 137). When partner phubbing becomes an increasingly common occurrence in a romantic relationship, conflict is often created, and attachment anxiety increases (Roberts & David, 2016). The results of studies such as this indicate that even seemingly harmless activities such as checking one's Facebook account on social media can be detrimental to relationship satisfaction, life satisfaction, and even correlated with depression (Roberts & David, 2016).

Facebook plays an important role in how romantic partners perceive and portray their relationships (Papp et al., 2012). How romantic partners portray their relationships on Facebook also impacts how the relationship functions (Papp et al., 2012). For example, when males change their relationship status to in a relationship and when females include their partners in their profile picture, higher levels of relationship satisfaction are reported (Papp et al., 2012). Papp et al. (2012) discovered that both males and females place differing levels of importance on the portrayal of their romantic relationships on Facebook, and disagreements over SNS relationship depiction is correlated to lower levels of relationship satisfaction. The conflict over Facebook portrayal of romantic relationships is often connected largely to themes such as jealousy, commitment, trust, power, control, and insecurity (Papp et al., 2012). According to Mod (2010), the unwritten rules of Facebook, such as relationship statuses and public displays of affection appear to provide partners clues as to what direction the romantic partnership

is going and whether it will be successful or not. Cole et al. (2018) supported these findings in their assertion that the public acknowledgment of one's relationship on Facebook or including their romantic partner in profile pictures leads to higher levels of relationship satisfaction.

Marital Satisfaction Factors

Divorce rates in the United States have skyrocketed within the past 5 decades (Vanover, 2016). Divorce Source (2015) reports individuals in their first marriage have a rate of divorce of over 40%, with rates elevating to 60% and 70% in second and third marriages. Much research has been produced regarding what factors contribute to marital satisfaction but according to a comprehensive study carried out by Vanover (2016), the areas that impact couples' longevity and sense of togetherness are external support, effective communication, and marital interaction. The purpose of discussing these factors at this point in the review of existing literature is to provide a foundation from which to assess the marital satisfaction of couples who will be surveyed in this study. One recent finding from the research is how mental health can be a hindrance to satisfied marriages if not dealt with appropriately and communicatively (Vanover, 2016). The research pulled from in this study was limited to professionals who had appropriate and applicable education, licensure, and experience to offer credibility to their perceptions (Vanover, 2016). In addition, the professionals surveyed throughout the research had over 7 years of experience in the field of marriage and family counseling and designed the assessment questions to ensure rich, data-driven responses (Vanover, 2016).

External Support

The benefits of an intact marriage are numerous including protection against poor health as well as providing numerous other health social and psychological benefits (Gove et al., 1983; Hewitt et al., 2010; Soulsby & Bennett, 2015; Waite & Gallagher, 2000; Wyke & Ford, 1992). House et al. (1988) described how social support systems are positively correlated to psychological health and well-being by acting as a protective factor against the negative effects of stressful circumstances. Soulsby and Bennett (2015) found that when married couples have high levels of perceived social support, their levels of psychological well-being are markedly increased. Conversely, the emerging research consistently suggests that low levels of perceived social support is positively correlated with significantly low levels of psychological health (Soulsby & Bennett, 2015).

McLaughlin et al. (2002) described how when individuals possess tightly interconnected social networks, they are less likely to enter into formal psychotherapy out of necessity and are more apt to lean on community support. Supportive friendships outside of the marital relationship are also correlated with lower levels of depression (McLaughlin et al., 2002). One interesting finding from the research is that when problems with friends emerge for married individuals, their mental health usually does not struggle, supporting the notion that within healthy marriages, preexisting close friendships often change forms and roles (Fisher et al., 1989; McLaughlin et al., 2002; Shulman, 1975). Within young adult populations, the possession of supportive friend groups often holds more influence over mental health than family relationships (McLaughlin et al., 2002). The findings indicate that when individuals are in the young adult stage, possessing life-giving, supportive relationships is extremely important for

mental health (McLaughlin et al., 2002). Conversely, as young adults begin to enter mid-life or have children, the significance of supportive friendships diminishes (McLaughlin et al., 2002; Shulman, 1975). Titus (1980) discussed how within many supportive friendships, individuals will seek support for their marriages by discussing the relationship, its strengths, weaknesses, the positive moments, and the negative ones, thus garnering wisdom and advice from trusted sources. The existing research appears to support the notion that social comparisons, that is, conversing with trusted friends and seeking out information through their responses, feelings, abilities, and expectations, appear to provide an accurate frame of reference that helps to generate more realistic marital expectations (Titus, 1980).

Effective Communication

A tremendous amount of research has been conducted regarding couples' communication patterns and how they shape both long- and short-term satisfaction (Driver et al., 2012). Li et al. (2018) reported that marital satisfaction is not only reliant on how partners interact over the smaller, more routine moments in their daily lives, but also how they act together when significant events occur over the course of their relationships. The way that married partners communicate with each other during the mundane moments of their daily lives lays an important foundation for communication patterns when conflicts arise (Gottman & Driver, 2005). Li et al. (2018) found that partners' interactive behaviors in various contexts are far more interrelated than what was previously assumed. Conflict management in marriages plays a crucial role in marital satisfaction (Li et al., 2018; Stanley et al., 2014). Within marriages, husbands usually tend to be more avoidant in resolving marital conflicts, which can be detrimental to the

relationship and erode trust and commitment (Christensen et al., 2006). From this research, it is clear how important communication surrounding conflict is within marriages and the significant effects that poor communication has on relationships (Li et al., 2018).

Within marriages, when one member expresses a need for the other person to change and is met by behavioral withdrawal from the other partner, relationship dissatisfaction or a reduction in marital quality usually follows shortly thereafter (Ross et al., 2019). Demands in a relationship provide partners the opportunity to voice their concerns and respectfully request that their partners meet those needs (Overall et al., 2009). Emerging research has illuminated the fact that when one partner withdraws in response to requests for change from the other partner, relationship satisfaction markedly decreases (Ross et al., 2019). One caveat to this research is that the withdrawal is usually found to be detrimental within couples who possess an abundance of resources such as social, educational, and economic (Ross et al., 2019). Conversely, within couples who do not possess these resources, withdrawal has been found to be beneficial (Ross et al., 2019). For example, if a partner comes home from work after a stressful day, withdrawing and engaging in self-soothing behaviors will often be more beneficial for the relationship if the couple does not have the resources for alternative stress-reducing solutions (Ross et al., 2019). Burlison and Denton (2014) define “initiator tendency” as “the propensity to initiate relationship discussions with spouses” (p. 141) and discovered that this aspect of marriages has a strong connection with marital satisfaction and individual partner satisfaction. When spouses initiate conversations about the relationship

with one another by using supportive and empathetic communication techniques, marital satisfaction tends to increase significantly (Burlison & Denton, 2014).

Adverse family experiences within the family of origin are usually linked to a number of social and emotional issues that occur later in life (Richardson, 2002). The concept of resilience, defined as an individual's successful adaptation to adversity or stressful experiences, has been focused on in much research regarding how people cope with harmful experiences from their families of origin (Zautra et al., 2010). One robust coping mechanism found in the research is that of supportive marital communication (Carr & Kellas, 2018). Individuals in supportive partnerships develop stronger levels of resilience and report possessing healthier strategies for managing adversity within the family of origin (Carr & Kellas, 2018). Although resilience is associated with higher levels of optimism and efficacy, supportive marital communication is shown to be a moderator for those qualities (Carr & Kellas, 2018). Marital communication and commitment are closely related (Hou et al., 2019). Communication has been found in existing research to act as a mediator between marital commitment and marital satisfaction (Hou et al., 2019).

Marital Interaction

Among the qualities surmised as the most important for marital satisfaction, interaction among spouses is of the utmost importance (Zuo, 1992). Throughout the existing research, positive reciprocal relationships between marital interaction and marital happiness have been discovered (Zuo, 1992). Zuo (1992) discussed how when spouses interact with each other, this produces an increase in likening of the other person which, in turn, leads to increased interactions. Thusly, happy marriages will usually facilitate

more interactions between spouses, which yields a strengthened marital bond and increasing marital satisfaction (Zuo, 1992). The existing and emerging research continues to support the fact that the more spouses interact, the higher their levels of happiness are (Zuo, 1992). Unfortunately, within the last several decades, spouses are feeling increasingly as though they do not spend a satisfactory amount of time with their partner (Roxburgh, 2006). Of the 927 respondents in Roxburgh's (2006) study, less than one fifth were satisfied with the amount of time spent with their spouses. Several studies have reported on how many Americans report that they do not feel as though they have enough time for their spouses, thus resulting in lower levels of relationship satisfaction (Harris, 1987; Simon, 1995). Greater time spent together within marriages is positively associated with higher levels of relationship satisfaction time passes (Johnson & Anderson, 2013).

Purpose of the Study

The literature lays an excellent foundation for this current study in that it demonstrates how social media usage can affect negative emotions among the general population, rather than just young adults. This study focused specifically on married individuals, using a simple web-based survey to ascertain both amount of time spent on Facebook and the marital satisfaction of the sample population in the study. As addictions to SNSs such as Facebook increase in the general population, threats to factors associated with marital satisfaction grow as well (Abbasi et al., 2019; Błachnio et al., 2016; Elphinston & Noller, 2011). Excessive social media usage can affect all of the aforementioned marital satisfaction factors, decreasing relationship satisfaction and causing dissension in marital relationships. As technology continually advances and the manner in which humans interact with social networking sites has shifted, a need for an

advancement in the existing literature has also emerged, specifically in regard to how social media usage affects relationships. Although a number of studies have examined the effect of social media on the individual, few studies have focused specifically on one SNS or on that site's overall effect on marital satisfaction. Because Facebook is the most widely used social networking site on Earth, this study seeks to focus solely on that platform, as surveying all social media platforms available would bring about broad results that may be difficult to interpret. Focusing on Facebook usage only allows the data yielded to further the research on how this SNS affects relationships and whether high levels of usage may be linked to marital dissatisfaction.

This study sought to ascertain whether increased Facebook use is linked to lower levels of relationship satisfaction within heterosexual married couples. The variables that were monitored in this study were: (a) total time spent on Facebook in a normal week, (b) how long the individual has been married, (c) the gender identity of the person participating in the study, and (d) the total score of the Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI-32). For the purposes of this study, Facebook usage was categorized as a continuous variable. These variables were chosen for a number of reasons. First, within research surveying men and women, there are often differences in responses among the different genders. By reporting on the trends found between men and women, the current body of research may be furthered in how sexes view their marriages differently in regard to social media usage. Total time spent on Facebook in a given week allowed hypotheses to be formulated regarding correlations between higher total time spent on Facebook and lower overall relationship satisfaction or lower total time spent on Facebook and higher overall relationship satisfaction. The last variable in this study was the total score on the

CSI-32. The score yielded by the individual, when paired with their other demographic and survey data, was used to study the relationship between marital satisfaction and Facebook usage.

Research Question

To examine the effects of Facebook usage on marital satisfaction, the following research question explored in this study was: Is there a relationship between weekly Facebook usage levels and overall marital satisfaction?

Hypotheses

- Hypothesis 1: Among individuals who use Facebook, there will be an inverse relationship between amounts of Facebook usage and CSI-32 scores.
- Hypothesis 2: Men who use Facebook regularly will have higher overall CSI-32 scores than women who use Facebook regularly.
- Hypothesis 3: Women who use Facebook regularly will have lower overall CSI-32 scores than men who use Facebook regularly.
- Hypothesis 4: Men who do not use Facebook regularly will have higher overall CSI-32 scores than men who do use Facebook regularly.
- Hypothesis 5: Women who do not use Facebook regularly will have higher overall CSI-32 scores than women who do use Facebook regularly.

Chapter 2

This study aimed to examine the nature of the relationship between Facebook usage and overall marital satisfaction. The existing body of research regarding how social media affects marriages is scant. This study also sought to expand the existing research by studying how Facebook usage may affect the marital satisfaction of men and women. Demographic factors such as age and sex were considered. The first hypothesis posited that higher amounts of weekly Facebook usage would yield lower scores on the CSI-32, a self-report measure of romantic relationship satisfaction. The second hypothesis of this study was that lower amounts of weekly Facebook usage would yield higher CSI-32 scores. In the third and fourth hypotheses, I posited that men would have higher relationship satisfaction scores than women and that, conversely, women would have lower overall relationship satisfaction scores than men. For the fifth and sixth hypotheses, I theorized that heterosexual couples who have been married for over 5 years with higher amounts of weekly Facebook usage would have lower average scores on the CSI-32 and that couples who have been married for less than 5 years with lower amounts of weekly Facebook usage would have higher average scores on the CSI-32. Hypotheses 1, 2, 5, and 6 were examined through a 2-tailed correlational analysis assuming a medium effect size with power level of 80%, $r(0.3)$. The data from Hypotheses 3 and 4 were examined using a 2-tailed t test that assumes a medium effect size ($d = 0.5$). This study was causal-comparative in its design. Facebook usage was classified as both an independent and continuous variable. The dependent variable in this study was the scores yielded by both groups on the CSI-32.

Participants

This study compared two groups. The power analysis revealed that for a medium effect size to be detected (80% chance), a sample of 128 participants would be required to meet the requirements of each of the aforementioned hypotheses ($d = 0.5$). Participants in the first group will be 64 married adults over the age of 18 years old who use Facebook regularly and have a smart phone that can track their weekly Facebook usage.

Participants in the second group were 64 married individuals who do not use Facebook or who use Facebook less than 1 hour per month. Both the first and second group were administered the CSI-32 assessment and their scores will be compared. These participants were recruited from a number of various sources such as Northwest University email distribution lists, Facebook posts, posting on community boards at coffee shops, churches, community centers, professor's student email distribution lists, setting up a reoccurring Facebook ad, using contacts at other colleges and universities to post flyers and digital advertisements, and visiting local young adult and college groups and making announcements about the study. Any promotions for this study specified that only married individuals who were over the age of 18 were eligible to participate. There were no race or gender requirements needed for this study. This required that participants were heterosexual. The inclusion criterion were as follows: the participants must (a) be married, (b) be heterosexual, (c) be over 18 years of age, (d) use Facebook, and (e) have a smart phone that can track their weekly time spent on Facebook. Participation in this study was on a volunteer basis. This study was mixed gender and was an even split between male and female participants so that potential differences in marital satisfaction and Facebook usage between sexes could be assessed. Eligibility for this study was

restricted to native English speakers. We also restricted eligibility for this study to individuals who own a smart phone that can track their weekly Facebook usage. Participants were incentivized to take part in the study by being entered into a drawing for a \$50 Amazon gift card.

Materials or Measures

A consent form developed by the author was also administered to the participants at the beginning of the survey. A multiple-choice survey question developed by the author was also used to gather data on how much time participants spent on Facebook that week (see Appendix A). A demographics survey developed by the author assessing age, sex, and length of marriage was also administered at the beginning of the survey (see Appendix B). The assessment used in this study was the Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI-32), developed by Funk and Rogge (2007; see Appendix C). This assessment was administered to participants in both groups using a web-based survey through Qualtrics. This survey was developed by the author and incorporated the CSI-32.

Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI-32)

The Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI-32) is a 32-item measure designed to assess relationship satisfaction of intact (married, cohabiting or dating) couples. This original version of the measure includes items aimed at assessing the presence of problems between individuals and the intensity of such problems. This is a self-report measure that can be completed in person or online. The CSI-16 is comprised of varying response scales, including ordinal and Likert scales:

- Item 1 uses a 7-point Likert scale (from 0 = *Extremely Unhappy* to 6 = *Perfect*).

- Item 2 uses a 6-point ordinal scale (from 0 = *Never* to 5 = *All the Time*).
- Items 3–6 use a 6-point ordinal scale (from 0 = *Not at all True* to 5 = *Completely True*).
- Items 7–10 use a 6-point ordinal scale (from 0 = *Not at All* to 5 = *Completely*).
- Items 11–16 use different 6-point ordinal scales (Item 11: 0 = *Boring* to 5 = *Interesting*; Item 12: 0 = *Bad* to 5 = *Good*; Item 13: 0 = *Empty* to 5 = *Full*; Item 14: 0 = *Fragile* to 5 = *Sturdy*; Item 15: 0 = *Discouraging* to 5 = *Hopeful*; and Item 16: 0 = *Miserable* to 5 = *Enjoyable*).

Strengths and Limitations

The CSI-32 is a valid measure with good internal consistency. The measure is applicable for use with a range of intact couples (e.g., married, cohabitating, exclusive but not living together). It is a short (32-item) measure that is free to access and easy to score. According to the existing research there is no information available about the test-retest reliability of the CSI-32.

Psychometrics

The CSI-32 reports good internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.62 to 0.90 (Bruner et al., 2015; Funk & Rogge, 2007; Hoagland & Levant, 2015; Resch & Alderson, 2014; Witherow et al., 2016). The developers of the CSI-32 had a mean Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.98. This study was conducted with a sample of 5,315 people in the United States (80% female, 75.8% Caucasian, 5% African American, 5.1% Latino and 4.1% Asian). The mean age was 26 years ($SD = 10.5$). Most of the respondents (60.1%) were dating seriously, 23.6% were married, and

16.3% were engaged (Funk & Rogge, 2007). Resch and Alderson (2014) reported a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.96. The study was conducted with a sample of 340 heterosexual women in Canada, ranging in age from 18–41 years ($M = 21.17$, $SD = 3.33$). Overall, 71.5% were White, 17.4% Asian, and the remainder were mixed race (5.9%), other (2.4%), Middle Eastern (1.8%), Hispanic (0.6%), Aboriginal (0.4%), or of African descent (0.3%). Bruner et al. (2015) reported a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.95. The study was conducted in the US with a sample of 189 undergraduate students aged between 18–25 years ($M_{age} = 19.58$, $SD = 1.38$, 73 male, 116 female) and currently involved in a romantic relationship of at least 3 months' duration. The participants were predominantly white (87%; 6% African American, 3% Asian, 3% Multi-racial, 2% Hispanic/Latino).

The developers (Funk & Rogge, 2007) evaluated the CSI-32 against the Dyadic Assessment Scales (32-item, 7-item, and 4-item versions), the Marital Adjustment Test (MAT), the Quality of Marriage Index (QMI), the Semantic Differential (SMD), the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMS) and the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS). The authors reported correlation coefficients between 0.85 and 0.98 with all the measures. This study was conducted with a sample of 5,315 people in the United States (80% female, 75.8% Caucasian, 5% African American, 5.1% Latino and 4.1% Asian). The mean age was 26.0 years ($SD = 10.5$). Because the CSI-16 has been developed using item response theory with a pool of items from a wide variety of measures, including the DAS, MAT, KMS, QMI, RAS, and SMD, the high correlation coefficients are not surprising. Moreover, the developers (Funk & Rogge, 2007) reported that CSI-32 scores discriminate between distressed and non-distressed relationships.

To score the CSI-32, the responses are added across all of the items. The point values of each response of each item are shown in Appendix C. When the scale is presented to participants, the point values are not shown. In the Qualtrics survey, radio buttons to click were put in place of those point values. CSI-32 scores can range from 0 to 161. Higher scores indicate higher levels of relationship satisfaction. CSI-32 scores falling below 104.5 suggest notable relationship dissatisfaction.

Study Procedures

At least 128 participants were desired to be recruited to achieve a significant statistical power level. These participants were recruited through a number of channels including online, community boards, Facebook posts, and email distribution. The study was presented to prospective participants via online Qualtrics link. This link contained the informed consent form that held all the pertinent details of the study. Within the informed consent, participants were informed of the purpose of the research, what the study entailed, and what was required of them. When consent forms (see Appendix D) were signed and demographic criteria were met, the participant were taken immediately to the Facebook usage report question (see Appendix B) and then to the CSI-32 (see Appendix C). Once the participant completed the CSI-32, they were taken to a final optional question allowing them to enter their primary email address to be entered into a drawing for a \$50 Amazon gift card (see Appendix E). When the desired participant count was reached, the study was closed to additional participants. Throughout the data collection period, information were stored in the Qualtrics site, which was password protected and encrypted. Data was then analyzed, and a report was formatted based on the results of the various surveys collected.

Summary

In summary, the goal of this study was to ascertain if social media usage, specifically Facebook, impacts the marital satisfaction of individuals. Through the use of Qualtrics, individuals were surveyed regarding their demographics and marital satisfaction by using the CSI-32. After a satisfactory amount of data were collected, the survey was closed, and data between groups were analyzed using an ANOVA and *t* tests. The data in this study were reported as a mean for each group and inferential statistics were used to determine whether the means between groups were significantly different from each other. The *t* test examined whether there were significant statistical differences in the means of the comparison groups and the ANOVA determined whether there was significant difference among the means of these groups. Causal-comparative research scrutinizes the relationship among variables where the independent variable (i.e., Facebook usage) has already occurred, thus making the study descriptive in nature. This causal-comparative research was retrospective in nature, in that the effects of the question investigated (whether Facebook usage affects marital satisfaction) had already occurred and the potential influence between variables was examined. The data yielded have been summarized and reported in Chapters 3 and 4.

Chapter 3

Analytic Strategy

The present research used the following analytic strategy. First, descriptive statistics of the key independent and dependent variables, as well as of the demographic statistics, were produced. Second, a correlation analysis was used to assess if among individuals who use Facebook, if there is an inverse relationship between amounts of Facebook usage and relationship satisfaction (Hypothesis 1). Third, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to assess if there was an interaction between sex and Facebook usage (measured as a binary yes/no variable) on relationship satisfaction. Finally, pairwise comparisons (*F* tests) were used to assess *where* there were male-female differences in relationship satisfaction based on Facebook usage (Hypotheses 2-4).

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Participants ($N = 293$) were recruited online ($M_{\text{age}} = 30.62$, $SD = 9.51$; 29.3% female). All participants were married heterosexuals with the average number of years married was 6.94 ($SD = 8.11$). Of those sampled, 37 (12.6%) had not previously used Facebook, while 256 (87.4%) had previously used Facebook to some extent (see Table 1). The key outcome measure in the results section was the CSI scale, which showed adequate internal consistency ($\alpha = .938$).

Table 1*Frequency of Facebook Usage in the Final Variable*

| Usage | Frequency | % |
|------------------|-----------|-------|
| None | 37 | 12.6 |
| Less than 1 hour | 24 | 8.2 |
| 1-2 hours | 109 | 37.2 |
| 3-4 hours | 76 | 25.9 |
| 5-6 hours | 21 | 7.2 |
| 7+ hours | 26 | 8.9 |
| Total | 293 | 100.0 |

Inferential Statistics: Facebook Usage and Marital Satisfaction

Hypothesis 1

First, I investigated, among individuals who use Facebook, if there was an inverse relationship between amounts of Facebook usage and relationship satisfaction. This was done with a Pearson's Correlation Coefficient, with Facebook usage (continuously measured; see Table 1) as the independent variable and marital satisfaction (measured continuously by the CSI scale) as the dependent variable. The results revealed a marginally significant relationship between Facebook usage and marital satisfaction, ($r[256] = -.11$ CI_{95%}: [-.23, .01], $p = .084$), such that greater Facebook usage predicted marginally less marital satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2–4 Overview

Next, I examined whether Facebook usage predicted marital satisfaction differently for men and women. This was done with an ANOVA (analysis of variance) that used sex (male/female) and Facebook usage (dichotomously measured) as independent variables and marital satisfaction (measured continuously by the CSI scale) as the dependent variable. Results indicated that there was a significant interaction,

($F[1,289] = 4.932, p < .05$; see Table 2 and Figure 1). Importantly, this interaction allowed us to subsequently investigate simple effects between Sex, Facebook usage, and the relationship satisfaction.

Table 2

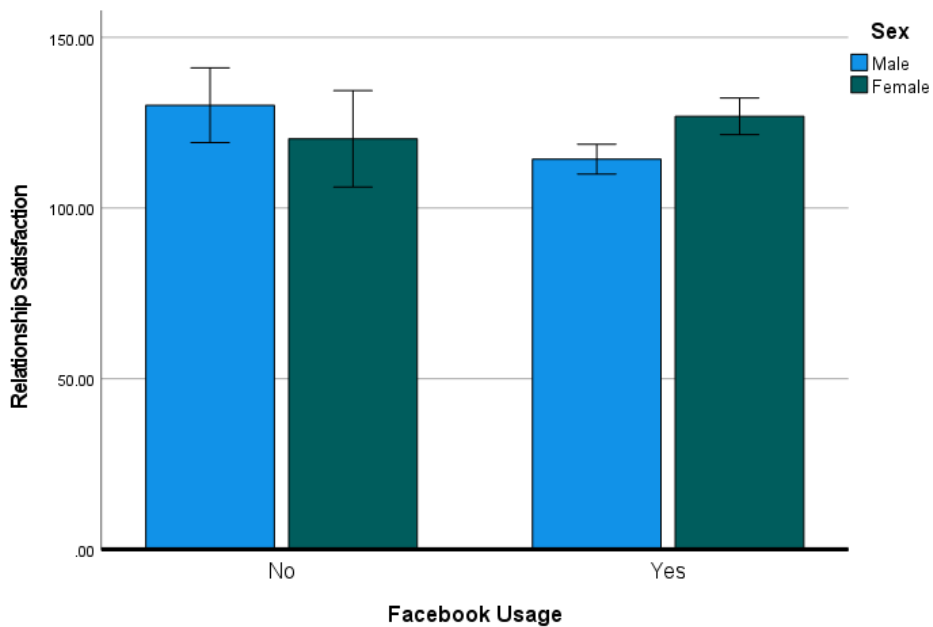
Main Results of ANOVA Investigating Sex and FB Usage on Relationship Satisfaction

| Variable | <i>SS</i> | <i>Df</i> | <i>MS</i> | <i>F</i> | η_p^2 |
|----------------------------|------------|-----------|-----------|----------|------------|
| FB Usage | 357.91 | 1 | 357.914 | .490 | .002 |
| Sex | .017 | 1 | .017 | .000 | .000 |
| Sex * FB usage interaction | 3600.60 | 1 | 3600.597 | 4.932* | .017 |
| Error | 210974.16 | 289 | 730.014 | | |
| Total | 4450576.00 | 293 | | | |

Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Figure 1

Graphed Results of ANOVA Investigating Sex and FB Usage on Relationship Satisfaction



Hypotheses 2 and 3

This study speculated whether men who use Facebook regularly had higher overall CSI-32 scores than women who use Facebook regularly (Hypothesis 2), and if in turn women who use Facebook regularly had lower overall CSI-32 scores than men who use Facebook regularly (Hypothesis 3). This was done with pairwise comparisons.

Contrary to the hypothesized results, results indicated that women who regularly used Facebook ($M = 125.94$, $SE = 2.68$) had significantly greater relationship satisfaction than men who use Facebook regularly ($M = 115.10$, $SE = 2.18$), the mean difference was -10.844 ($CI_{95\%}[-17.63, -4.05]$, $F[1,289] = 9.88$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .033$).

Hypotheses 4 and 5

Next, I investigated whether men who *do not* use Facebook regularly had higher overall CSI-32 scores than men who *do* use Facebook regularly (Hypothesis 4). Results indicated that men who regularly used Facebook ($M = 115.10$, $SE = 2.18$) experienced significantly less relationship satisfaction than men that do not ($M = 129.39$, $SE = 5.63$), Mean difference = -14.29 , $CI_{95\%}[-26.18, -2.41]$, $F(1,289) = 5.60$, $p = .019$, Partial Eta = $.019$.

Finally, the hypothesis that women who *do not* use Facebook regularly will have higher overall CSI-32 scores than women who *do* use Facebook regularly (Hypothesis 5) was evaluated. Results indicated that women who regularly used Facebook ($M = 118.50$, $SE = 7.22$) showed no difference in relationship satisfaction than women who do not ($M = 125.94$, $SE = 2.68$), Mean difference = -7.44 , $CI_{95\%}[-22.60, 7.72]$, $F(1,289) = .93$, $p = .335$, Partial Eta = $.003$.

Summary

The purpose of the present research was to investigate whether Facebook usage predicted relationship satisfaction. The current results provided partial support for the aforementioned hypotheses. First, among individuals who use Facebook, there was a marginal inverse relationship between amounts of Facebook usage and relationship satisfaction. Second, Facebook usage predicted marital satisfaction differently for men and women. Specifically, the results indicated that among regular Facebook users, women had greater relationship satisfaction than men. However, among those that did not use Facebook regularly, the results showed no difference in relationship satisfaction between men and women. Moreover, regular Facebook usage did not predict women's relationship satisfaction, but regular Facebook usage did predict less relationship satisfaction among men.

Chapter 4

The primary goal of this study was to further the existing body of research examining the effects of social media usage on the individual—specifically, how Facebook usage interacts with perceived marital satisfaction. The recent drastic increase in humanity's ability to be connected via the internet and SNSs has birthed a relatively novel interest in whether these advents truly unite the human race or create a heightened sense of isolation and estrangement (Jiang & Leung, 2012; Yamamoto & Ananou, 2015; Young, 2011; Young et al., 2011). As is reported in the existing literature, additions to SNSs such as Facebook are increasing at an alarming rate (Abbasi et al., 2019; Błachnio et al., 2016; Elphinston & Noller, 2011). SNS platforms such as Facebook, although stimulating to a person's billions of neuronal receptors, have been unequivocally linked to significantly hazardous problems such as low self-esteem, depression, body image issues, poor life satisfaction, worsened mood, damaged relationships, and weaker marriages (Armstrong et al., 2000; Bergagna & Tartaglia, 2018; Błachnio et al., 2016; Grieve et al., 2020; Isaranon, 2019; Kim & Lee, 2011; Lee-Won et al., 2014). As is commonly cited in research, the average rate of divorce in the United States is about 50% (Cohen, 2019; Smith et al., 2019). Many factors contribute to divorce among married couples in the United States, but the most commonly reported reasons are lack of commitment, infidelity, and conflict or arguing (Scott et al., 2013). Additionally, divorced individuals usually have higher levels of psychological distress, substance abuse, and depression as compared to their married counterparts (Amato & Previti, 2003; Hughes & Waite, 2009). Although marriage helps to maintain stability and has a myriad of other psychological benefits, rates of cohabitation have skyrocketed in the last 2

decades, likely contributing to the declining rates of marriage and the loss of its sanctity in the United States (Reeves & Pulliam, 2020; Stafford et al., 2014; Waldfogel et al., 2010). The institution of marriage in the United States remains in a more fragile state than it has been in decades and because of this, contemporary factors affecting marital relationships such as SNSs like Facebook must be considered (Bordeyne, 2009; Wilcox & Wolfinger, 2007).

A total of 293 participants were recruited online who were all married, heterosexual individuals that either used Facebook to a varying extent or did not use it at all. Of the total sample, only 37 individuals did not use Facebook and 256 people regularly used it to some extent. The CSI-32 scale was the primary outcome measure in this study which demonstrated adequate internal consistency ($\alpha = .938$).

Findings

Relationship Satisfaction and Facebook Usage

The first hypothesis theorized that the more an individual used Facebook, the less satisfied they would be with their marriage. Through the use of a continuously measured Pearson's Correlation Coefficient, a marginally significant relationship between Facebook usage and marital satisfaction was yielded where greater Facebook usage predicted a lesser amount of marital satisfaction. Although this result was marginally significant, its implications support the original hypothesis that higher levels of Facebook usage would be correlated with lower levels of marital satisfaction.

Gender Differences and Relationship Satisfaction

Hypotheses 2 and 3 were concerned with how men and women's Facebook usage would affect their relationship satisfaction. The second hypothesis was that men who

used Facebook regularly would have higher overall CSI-32 scores than women who also used it regularly. Additionally, it was also postulated in Hypothesis 3 that if women who use Facebook regularly would have lower overall CSI-32 scores than men who use Facebook regularly. Using pairwise comparisons, the results were contrary to what was hypothesized. Interestingly enough, women who regularly used Facebook had significantly greater relationship satisfaction than men who use Facebook regularly. Hypotheses 4 and 5 were concerned with individuals who do not use Facebook, namely how the marital satisfaction men and women who do not use Facebook have would compare to that of men and women who do use Facebook regularly. Firstly, it was postulated men who did not use Facebook regularly would have higher overall CSI-32 scores than men who do use Facebook regularly. The results of this analysis revealed men who regularly used Facebook experienced significantly less relationship satisfaction than men who did not, thus confirming the original premise. Lastly, the researcher questioned whether women who do not used Facebook regularly will have higher overall CSI-32 scores than women who do use Facebook regularly. The analysis of the data revealed no difference in relationship satisfaction between female regular users and nonusers of Facebook. Analyses of the results are discussed in the following section.

Discussion

Confirmed Hypotheses

The results of this study indicate that there is partial validity for two of the original hypotheses and the other three did not yield significant results and merit further exploration in future studies. Hypotheses 1 and 4 were confirmed, implying that greater Facebook usage can be linked with lower levels of marital satisfaction and that men who

use Facebook regularly are more likely to have lower levels of marital satisfaction than men who do not. As has been discussed in previous literature, negative feelings about relationships have been correlated with high levels of SNS usage and are likely due to the fact that these platforms highlight the most glamorous and exciting components of users' lives and usually omit the difficulties that all of humanity faces at some point throughout the course of their lives (Abbasi & Drouin, 2019; Acedera & Yeoh, 2018; Błachnio et al., 2016; Clayton et al., 2013). The frequent use of SNSs such as Facebook can cause the married individual to develop anxious, preoccupied, or avoidant attachment styles as they fear that their partner may not find them attractive as compared to other Facebook users on their "news feed" (Demircioğlu & Köse, 2018; Elphinston & Noller, 2011). Perhaps regular Facebook users fear that their partner would rather be with someone who leads a more interesting or exciting life or become jealous that their partner is spending more time on Facebook than interacting with them (Demircioğlu & Köse, 2018; Elphinston & Noller, 2011; McDaniel et al., 2017; Russell et al., 2013; Valenzuela et al., 2014). Men using Facebook frequently have been found to have higher levels of narcissism than men who do not use Facebook, which may be one explanation why male Facebook users reported lower levels of relationship satisfaction—narcissistic men are often unhappy with their partners and act with aggression, selfishness, and jealousy within their relationships, usually resulting in poor success in long-term romantic partnerships such as marriage (Keller et al., 2014; Walters & Horton, 2015; Wurst et al., 2017). Limiting one's social media use is linked to positive effects such decreased loneliness, depression, higher levels of subjective well-being, and lower levels of stress (Hunt et al., 2018; Vally & D'Souza, 2019). Research from Brooks (2015) regarding personal social media usage

revealed lower levels of efficiency and well-being among those who used SNSs frequently.

The aforementioned data support the results yielded from Hypotheses 1 and 4. It appears that although there are benefits to using social media, the negative consequences have grave implications for marital satisfaction and on males (Ellison et al., 2007; Elsayed, 2021; Guinta & John, 2018; Gulatee & Combes, 2018b; Gulatee et al., 2021; Joinson, 2008; Kross et al., 2013; Rosenblum & Lewis, 2003).

Unconfirmed Hypotheses

Although the results of Hypotheses 2 and 3 did not support the original theory, their results merit further discussion. The original idea of this study was that rates of marital satisfaction would be higher among men who regularly used Facebook and that females who regularly used this application would have lower levels of marital satisfaction. The researcher's rationale behind this theory was due to the current research postulating that women tend to have higher rates of jealousy than men within serious romantic relationships and therefore, spending extended amounts of time using Facebook may lead to unhealthy comparisons involving attractiveness, quality of other relationships, and choice of partner as well as skewed perceptions of what healthy dependence on a partner looks like (Arnocky et al., 2012; White, 1980, 1981).

It is a widely known truth that social media has forever altered the way that humans interact with one another and that SNSs have impacted women socially, emotionally, and physically (Chukwuere & Chukwuere, 2017; Mustafa et al., 2020; Nyangeni et al., 2015; Smith & Anderson, 2019; Yamamoto & Ananou, 2015; Young et al., 2011). Curiously enough, the results of Hypotheses 2 and 3 revealed a significantly higher rate of marital

satisfaction among women who regularly use Facebook than men who also regularly use this SNS. There are several reasons why these results may have been generated. First, it is possible that through the use of Facebook, females are able to better monitor their partner's behavior and activities, building feelings of trust in the relationship (Fox & Anderegg, 2014; Fox et al., 2013; Frampton & Fox, 2018). Another possible reason for these results is that women in securely attached marriages may feel that their partners make a satisfactory effort to spend quality time with them, thus lowering the potency of the negative effects that SNSs may have (Stolarski et al., 2016). These results may also be attributed to the fact that SNSs with messaging features such as Facebook allow women to feel more connected with their spouse throughout the marriage, fostering a deeper sense of unity (Kindred & Roper, 2004; Pettigrew, 2009).

The final hypotheses in this study concerned the differences between women who regularly use Facebook and those who do not. Although the researcher postulated that women who did not use Facebook regularly would have higher levels of marital satisfaction, no difference was found between the two groups of females. Some speculations as to why SNSs may not be a mediating variable in female marital satisfaction are as follows. One primary reason for the lack of significance in this hypothesis is that when levels of self-regulation in females are high, it positively impacts relationship satisfaction (Bunt & Hazelwood, 2017). Therefore, whether females do or do not use Facebook regularly, if they have adequate self-regulatory skills, they may find themselves more satisfied with their marriages. Another reason for this result may be related to attachment styles in females (Schade et al., 2013). Secure attachment styles are positively related to relationship outcomes, and females whose marriages are stable may

not feel differences in relationship satisfaction regardless of their SNS habits (Mikulincer et al., 2002; Schade et al., 2013). An additional possibility behind this result may be linked to the average female age in the sample (i.e., 30 years old). Research has demonstrated that when adults get married in their early to mid-20s, higher levels of well-being are reported (Horwitz et al., 1996; Kefalas et al., 2011). These speculations require further research into this topic, discussed further in the limitations section.

Practical and Clinical Implications

The results of this study hold several practical and clinical implications which are discussed as follows. Firstly, it is gravely important to pause, linger, and ponder what the barefaced result of Hypothesis 1 is implying. Although the results were marginally significant, there remains a correlation between increased Facebook usage and lower levels of relationship satisfaction. As the digital age races forward at breakneck speed, it is crucial that healthcare providers have an awareness as to how SNS usage can affect relationships. It is important to note that correlation does not necessarily signify causation and although this result was marginal, it was significant. Regardless, this researcher firmly believes that it is imperative for clinicians to provide information pertaining to the research that has demonstrated the detriments of social media usage to relationships. These results imply that although SNSs do have the ability to unite individuals who would otherwise be estranged from one another, its insidious effects ought not be ignored. The current clinical experience of this researcher has involved working with a wealth of individuals and couples all experiencing some form of relationship distress or turmoil. Many of these individuals engaged in some form of cheating behavior, often through SNSs, and were caught by their partner, acting as the impetus for seeking therapy

services. Additionally, the researcher has worked with individuals who express a great deal of distress caused by their SNS habits including the amount of news they read, amount of time spent scrolling through feeds, and how many or few interactions they get from followers on their posts. Seeking counseling for relational issues is not a new phenomenon, but this research supports the belief that the drastic increase in technological intervention has added a plethora of new causes for relationship turbulence.

The implications that these results have on males is also significant. Current research on SNS demographics demonstrates that 65% of men use SNSs to some degree (Perrin & Anderson, 2019). As healthcare providers, this statistic is important to note as it implies that many of the male clients encountered in practice will use social media in some fashion, thus subjecting themselves to its negative effects. Not all males will experience lower levels of marital satisfaction due to their social media usage, but as the results of this study have revealed, a significant number of SNS-using males will likely experience some level of marital dissatisfaction correlated with their online behaviors. Thus, providers must be readied with current research on this subject to provide authoritative psychoeducation to clients regarding how their SNS usage may be affecting their mental health. Furthermore, this researcher believes it is vital that clinicians ready themselves with this information so that they may offer it as a potential factor involved in the relational issues with which male clients may be struggling. With rates of addiction to SNSs demonstrating a harsh incline in the last 2 decades, clinicians must be poised to offer adequate counsel for individuals struggling with negative effects stemming from social media (Andreassen, 2015; Griffiths et al., 2014; Hawi & Samaha, 2017).

Concerning the unanticipated results of Hypothesis 3, it is supposed that there are several important implications to be examined. Although it was postulated that female regular Facebook users would have lower marital satisfaction than male regular Facebook users, the results indicated that women who regularly used Facebook actually had *higher* marital satisfaction rates than men with regular Facebook usage habits. According to existing research, women tend to value relationships higher than men, often experiencing high levels of distress when social involvement is low (Downing et al., 2005; Gersick et al., 2000; Umberson et al., 1996; Westburg, 2001). Additionally, males tend to favor mastery activities and goal-oriented tasks over social relationships (Boggiano et al., 1991; Jennings et al., 1984; Patrick et al., 1999). Bearing these data in mind, one potential justification why female Facebook users exhibited higher levels of marital satisfaction than men may be that women experience greater levels of enjoyment from sharing their relationship journeys with others online and observing the relationships of others and men may not derive the same amount of pleasure. Furthermore, the engagement females receive on SNSs (e.g., “likes,” comments, or reactions) may bolster their feelings of positivity toward their significant other and the marriage itself.

Finally, the results of this study may be advantageously applied in the realm of couples counseling as well. A portion of the information gleaned from this study clearly bolsters the notion that an abundance of time spent interacting with SNSs such as Facebook has an unfavorable effect on marital satisfaction. Many couples participating in counseling often present with feelings of betrayal and loneliness (Fitness, 2012; Gibson, 2008; Laaser et al., 2015; Moller & Vossler, 2015; Peluso & Spina, 2008). These unrelenting negative feelings within the relationship can often lead one or both members

of the couple to seek security, love, or emotional intimacy from outside their partnership, often leading to physical or emotional infidelity carried out online (Guitar et al., 2017; Nelson & Salawu, 2017; Shackelford & Buss, 1997; Shackelford et al., 2000; Urooj & Anjum, 2015). It is imperative that couples therapists are educated on the prevalence of online infidelity behaviors committed by partners and how the advent of the internet, specifically SNSs, makes it simpler than ever before to betray one's partner or engage in affair behaviors (Fincham & May, 2017; Isanejad & Bagheri, 2018; Mao & Raguram, 2009; Mileham, 2007; Vossler, 2016). Bearing this information in mind, a conclusion may be drawn that minimizing SNS usage may protect a couple from the likelihood of betrayal or an affair. The emerging data on marriage and rates of infidelity are alarming; yet, it must be taken into account by therapists and assessed for within session.

Additionally, it is crucial that mental health professionals understand how emotional infidelity can be equally as damaging as physical cheating behaviors and how an increase in emotional infidelity is being seen as SNS engagement increases (Azhar et al., 2018; Buss, 2018; Frederick & Fales, 2016; Rustaei et al., 2016). Therefore, therapists should encourage their couples to be mindful of their SNS usage and to be honest with their partner about SNS engagement. Additionally, it would behoove therapists to recommend that couples limit the amount of time spent on SNSs and provide education as to why this could prove to be beneficial for marriages.

Study Limitations

Due to the limitations of this study, larger sample sizes were unable to be recruited and usage of multiple social networking platforms were unable to be surveyed. Additionally, an equal number of regular Facebook users and non-Facebook users were

unable to be obtained due to the fact that over 3 billion people actively use Facebook, 39% of which are married, and it was far more difficult to enlist nonusers (Horvath, 2020; Kemp, 2022). Another limitation of this study is the demographics of the population surveyed. This sample consisted of solely heterosexual individuals and did not account for homosexual individuals who are married. The Facebook platform was the only platform surveyed in this study and other SNS usage was not included in data collection, which limited the scope of the results. Another demographic consideration is that an equal number of men and women were not obtained. The COVID-19 global pandemic is also a consideration, as these data were collected during this global crisis when millions of individuals were spending exponentially increased amounts of time on SNSs (Masciantonio et al., 2021; Saud et al., 2020); and therefore, the data may be skewed toward higher levels of SNS usage where it may not have been as high in years past. Finally, only sex, age, and length of marriage were included in the demographics survey and additional research may want to incorporate other variables such as geographic location, number of dependents, quality of physical intimacy, and quality of communication and conflict resolution skills.

Future Directions and Recommendations

Future studies of this nature should assess multiple SNSs such as Instagram, Twitter, or Snapchat and examine usage levels on those platforms compared to perceived relationship satisfaction. The limited resources and time constraints of this study only allowed Facebook to be studied and a study assessing the effects of multiple SNS platforms would be useful in that many different areas of data could be synthesized and discussed, deepening the existing research. Additionally, many SNS users use platforms

other than Facebook more frequently, with Instagram being the second most widely used site, so surveying other SNSs like these will provide further valuable data (Clement, 2020).

The limitations of Northwest University's institutional review board allowed participation from only heterosexual individuals. Due to the fact that only heterosexual individuals were included in this study, future research on this topic should include members of the LGBTQIA+ community and survey their relationship satisfaction in tandem with SNS usage. As romantic relationships and domestic partnerships continue to evolve, it will be important to assess individuals in varying relationship dynamics and with diverse sexualities to deeper understand how SNS usage may or may not affect individuals in nontraditional romances. Much data exist regarding heterosexual relationships and their dynamics but the literature regarding members of the LGBTQIA+ community is sparse in comparison. Further studies should seek out populations within this minority group and use assessments tailored to the intricacies of their relationships.

This study used solely quantitative data and a qualitative approach regarding how individuals feel about their SNS usage and their marriages, complete with interviews, would be beneficial in understanding the correlations between SNS usage and marital satisfaction. This could include recruiting a small number of participants and spending extensive amounts of time administering various questionnaires, surveys, and interviews to them and formulating a case study. These tests and interviews could then be coded and analyzed for themes pertaining to SNS usage and relationship satisfaction. These qualitative case studies could also be more extensive and assess many different facets of an individual or couple's life, offering deeper insights into how SNS usage may be

impacted by many different factors and, in turn, affect more areas of functioning than previously hypothesized.

Future studies should also analyze specific variables within SNS usage and everyday functioning of married adults. Lengths of time spent on SNSs as compared to relationship satisfaction and how increments of time may affect perceived marital happiness should be assessed. Other variables such as socioeconomic status, number of dependents, family size, exercise, diet, income, age, perceived social support, perceived familial support, and religiosity should also be included in future studies so as to broaden our understanding of how SNS usage interacts with the various aspects of an individual's personality and lifestyle. Studies regarding comparing results within groups, such as groups of only males or only females meeting various demographic criteria, their SNS habits, and marital satisfaction levels would also be beneficial for future research.

Additionally, further research should be conducted on treatments for SNS addiction and poor mental health functioning due to excessive use. As it stands, there are no specific treatments tailored for problematic SNS usage, and as technological advancements increase, it is likely that treatment options will need to be made available. These treatments should specifically target the negative effects of SNS usage and help clients to recover from their detrimental effects. Clinicians should also be armed with knowledge of how to implement these treatment modalities effectively with their clients.

Lastly, the implications of this study call for an increased amount of psychoeducation from mental health practitioners, physicians, and educators to their clients regarding the damaging effects of social media and its implications for relationships, mental and physical health, socialization, etc. These results should cause

clinicians to take their clients' SNS habits into consideration in case conceptualizations and understand that it may be having a more profound effect than they think. It is imperative that mental health professionals arm themselves with the emerging knowledge on this subject so that they may provide adequate care and treatment for their clients.

Conclusions

This topic is vitally important to study due to the reality that the world, with its daily technological leaps forward, is rapidly changing. Interpersonal communication as we know it is in an ever-shifting state of transformation and as the way we interact with each other changes, so does human behavior and, in turn, the human psyche. The research yielded in this study will hopefully add to existing research on how social media usage can either positively or negatively affect interpersonal relationships, specifically marriages. The concept of marriage—what it stands for, signifies, and serves—has metamorphosed since creation. As professionals who are in the field of mental health and the study of human behavior, it is our privilege to examine how societal alterations affect not only the general population but the individual as well. Marriage is an extremely nuanced and complex topic. The existing body of research on this subject is vast and continues to grow. Seventy-five percent of Facebook users in the United States use the website every day (Gramlich, 2020). This staggering statistic implies that social media is affecting the nation in aspects that are both visible and invisible. The topic of social media and marriage is important to study for the same reason that humans are important to study: they will continue to shift and adapt to the environmental and systemic changes that occur, thus causing a natural change in the structure of relationships and marriages. As the field of psychology and the treatment of mental health continues to evolve, this

research implies that an increased amount of clients will likely present with poor mental health strongly associated with their elevated levels of social media usage and the resulting effects. Studying the consequences of these technological changes will conceivably allow mental health professionals to better understand how to provide outstanding care and counseling for the individual and the couple.

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Appendix A**Weekly Facebook Usage Survey**

Over the last month, how many hours, on average, did you spend on Facebook every week?

- A. Less than 1 hour
- B. 1-2 hours
- C. 3-4 hours
- D. 5-6 hours
- E. 7+ hours

Appendix B

Demographics Survey

1. What is your sex?
 - A. Male
 - B. Female
2. Do you identify as heterosexual?
 - A. Yes
 - B. No
3. What is your age?

[Fill in blank with age]
4. How long have you been married?

[Fill in blank with years and months]

Appendix C

CSI-32

Please indicate the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.

| | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|----------------|
| Extremely Unhappy | Fairly Unhappy | A Little Unhappy | Happy | Very Happy | Extremely Happy | Perfect |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

Most people have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list.

| | Always Agree | Almost Always Agree | Occa- sionally Disagree | Fre- quently Disagree | Almost Always Disagree | Always Disagree |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Amount of time spent together | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Making major decisions | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Demonstrations of affection | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |

| | All the time | Most of the time | More often than not | Occa- sionally | Rarely | Never |
|---|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well? | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| How often do you wish you hadn't gotten into this relationship? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | Not at all TRUE | A little TRUE | Some- what TRUE | Mostly TRUE | Almost Completely TRUE | Completely TRUE |
|--|--------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| I still feel a strong connection with my partner | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| If I had my life to live over, I would marry (or live with / date) the same person | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Our relationship is strong | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| I sometimes wonder if there is someone else out there for me | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| My relationship with my partner makes me happy | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I have a warm and comfortable relationship with my partner | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I can't imagine ending my relationship with my partner | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I feel that I can confide in my partner about virtually anything | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I have had second thoughts about this relationship recently | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| For me, my partner is the perfect romantic partner | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I really feel like part of a team with my partner | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I cannot imagine another person making me as happy as my partner does | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | Not at all | A little | Some-what | Mostly | Almost Completely | Completely |
|--|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| How rewarding is your relationship with your partner? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| How well does your partner meet your needs? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | | | | | | | |
|--|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|--|
| | Worse than all others (Extremely bad) | | | | | | Better than all others (Extremely good) |
| | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |

How good is your relationship compared to most?

| | | | | | | |
|--|--------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | Never | Less than once a month | Once or twice a month | Once or twice a week | Once a day | More often |
| | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Do you enjoy your partner's company?
How often do you and your partner have fun together?

For each of the following items, select the answer that best describes *how you feel about your relationship*. Base your responses on your first impressions and immediate feelings about the item.

| | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|------------------|
| INTERESTING | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | BORING |
| BAD | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | GOOD |
| FULL | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | EMPTY |
| LONELY | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | FRIENDLY |
| STURDY | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | FRAGILE |
| DISCOURAGING | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | HOPEFUL |
| ENJOYABLE | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | MISERABLE |

Appendix D

Facebook Usage and Perceived Relationship Satisfaction Among Married

Individuals

Northwest University

Consent Form

Welcome to Facebook usage and marital satisfaction, a research study that examines the relationship between Facebook usage and perceived relationship satisfaction among married individuals. This study is being conducted by Julian Dayton, a 4th year PsyD student at Northwest University.

To qualify for participation, you must be an adult age 18 or older. Completion of this study typically takes approximately 15 minutes and is strictly anonymous. Your responses will be treated confidentially and will not be linked to any identifying information about you. If you agree to participate in this study, you will complete questionnaires regarding: your sex, age, length of your current marriage, and the average amount of time spent on Facebook weekly within the last month. In addition, you will fill out a questionnaire called the Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI-32) that asks various questions about your relationship with your partner. Upon entering your primary email address at the end of this survey, you will be entered into a drawing for a \$50 Amazon gift card. Please note that entering your email address is optional, but you will not be eligible for the gift card if it is not entered. Your survey answers will be sent to a link at Qualtrics.com where data will be stored in a password protected electronic format. Qualtrics does not collect identifying information such as your name, email address, or IP address. Therefore, your responses will remain anonymous. No one will be able to identify you or your answers, and no one will know whether or not you participated in the study. Additionally, all data collection and data submitted will be password encrypted and stored on a password-encrypted Microsoft OneDrive file. All data forms and information will be destroyed by 06/30/2022.

The Northwest University Institutional Review Board has approved the study. No deception is involved, and participation in this study poses minimal risk to participants, although some participants may experience emotional distress when answering questions regarding their marriage satisfaction and/or average Facebook usage. If content of this survey causes you significant distress, please contact the 24-hour Crisis Line at (866) 427-4747, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at (800) 273-8255, or local services such as NUhope Community Counseling Center at (425) 889-5261. To find a therapist pertaining to negative feelings that may arise from this study, please visit psychologytoday.com. To find a therapist that specializes in marital issues, please visit gottmanreferralnetwork.com.

Participation in this study is voluntary, and you may elect to discontinue the questionnaire at any time and for any reason. You may print this consent form for your records. By submitting the survey, you are giving permission to use your responses in this research study.

The results from this study will be used for dissertation and may be presented within a variety of psychological forums (formal and informal). Your responses may help us learn more about the effects of Facebook usage on married individuals and pave the way for future research.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact the principal researcher, Julian Dayton, at [REDACTED]. If you have further questions, please contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Kim Lampson, at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the Chair of the Northwest University IRB, Professor Cheri Goit, at [REDACTED].

Before beginning the survey, please read this consent form in full. If you understand all information contained in this form and agree to freely participate in this study, please click the "I Agree" button. You may exit the survey at any time.

Thank you for considering participation in this study.

Julian Dayton
4th Year Doctoral Student
[REDACTED]

Please select your choice below. You may print a copy of this consent form for your records. Clicking on the "Agree" button indicates that

- You have read the above information
- You voluntarily agree to participate
- You are 18 years of age or older

- Agree
- Disagree

Appendix E

- OPTIONAL QUESTION TO ENTER YOURSELF INTO DRAWING FOR \$50

AMAZON GIFT CARD:

What is your primary email address?

[Fill in the blank with email address]

Appendix F

Operational Definitions

The following are definitions for key concepts and constructs to support the proposed study:

Social networking site (SNS). For this study's purposes, *social networking site* is defined as an online platform that allows users to create a public profile and interact with other users. Social networking sites usually allow a new user to provide a list of people with whom they share a connection, and then allow the people on the list to confirm or deny the connection. After connections are established, the new user can search the networks of connections to make more connections.

Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI-32). The CSI-32 is a 32-item measure designed to assess relationship satisfaction of intact (married, cohabiting or dating) couples. This original version of the measure includes items aimed at assessing the presence of problems between individuals and the intensity of such problems.

Adult. For this study's purposes, *adults* will include participants who are over the age of 18.

Marriage. For this study's purposes, *marriage* is defined as the legally or formally recognized union of two people as partners in a personal relationship.